



A PILGRIMAGE OVER THE
PRAIRIES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE FORTUNES OF A COLONIST."

VOL. I.

London:

T. CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
22, LINCOLN STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

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PILGRIMAGE OVER THE PRAIRIES.

CHAPTER I.

MAY, 1825.—The reader who may bear in mind my former record of Adventures (as colonist), will observe that nearly thirteen years have passed from the time of their conclusion to that inscribed above, which marks the commencement of a new series connected with and consequent upon them.

The interval had for the most part been passed by me in the quiet avocations of country life, and the enjoyment of much

happiness in the married state until a few months before, when the cup had been dashed from my lips by the death of my amiable partner.

Whilst thus cancelling the great blessing of a happy union, Providence had still left me a source of solace in a daughter (now near eight years old), our only surviving child, who with the likeness promised also the virtues of her parent—thus lightening, while she recalled her loss.

Notwithstanding, however, this spring of comfort in the desert, I found the tedium of my position pall more and more upon me, and was meditating various schemes of recreation and relief, when a circumstance occurred which gave them at once a definite form and direction.

I had descended one fine May morning into the breakfast parlour, and, with my back to the fire, been watching my little Susan assisting the important process of growth by repeated appeals to the porridge bowl, ogling

her dad between whiles with the right hearty good will that belongs to her unschooled age, when, having been favoured with the first intelligence of the day, such as "Pa! Peggy Clinker's come to make my frock," and "Pa, the newspaper's there," I availed myself of the latter item of information, and proceeded to peruse its contents.

The very first paragraph that met my eye was the following, under the head of "Marriage in high life. — On the 8th inst., at Hanover Square, by the Rev. Theophilus Farleton, cousin of the bridegroom, the Hon. Cyrus Farleton, nephew and heir of the Earl of Leighton, to Barbara Theodora, only daughter of Sir Michael Branfold, Bart. A course of festivities and rejoicings is expected to come off the ensuing week at Leighton Park, the seat of the noble Earl, in honour of the occasion."

Cyrus Farleton! Leighton Park! The names struck me like an old tune of boyhood, or fragments of a half-remembered dream.

"Festivities and rejoicings! By Jupiter! a good idea. Why shouldn't we go and share them?" I exclaimed, clinching the sudden thought with a thump on the table.

Whilst revolving the matter further, I felt a touch at my elbow, and found my little *vis-a-vis* come on a mission of remonstrance.

"Pa!" she murmured, "you've spilt the milk on my pinny."

"Well, my dear, run to Cecily, and she will get you another."

"But, pa," she added, arching her eyes, and sinking her voice into an expostulatory tone; "you told me it was naughty to swear."

"Was I swearing, child? why, what did I say?"

"You said 'by Jupiter,' pa."

"But Jupiter was a false god, my chick, and therefore we may consider the obtestation as a nullity. I was thinking, Susan."

Cyrus Farleton! Leighton Park! What a flood of interest seemed suddenly to well about the two names.

"What were you thinking, pa?"

"I was thinking, Su, that you and I would go and treat ourselves to a holiday."

"Oh, how nice! and Jacob, and Cecily, and old Aggy, and Norman?"

"Jacob and Aggy must stay to take care of the house, but we shall want Cecily to look after our 'herb o' grace,' and Norman to provide her with a playmate."

"Oh! and when shall we go?"

"We'll set off to-morrow, so you can tell Peggy Clinker to send for her sister, and contrive to get your frock done by this evening."

Away scampered my little gossip on her gleeful errand, whilst on my own part I unlocked my writing-desk, and looked over a file of letters and other papers whose subject matter was in some sort connected with the paragraph I had just read.

One of these may require more particular mention. In the course of the past winter I had, one bitter day, been out with my gun along the coast after wild ducks, when wish-

ing to relieve the tedium of watching, with a passing whiff, I put my hand into my coat pocket in search of my tobacco pouch. It was a warm blanket coat, required by the severity of the weather, which I had not had on for years, when lo! instead of the trusty sealskin, my fingers rustled against a paper, which, on examining, I found to be nothing less than the certificate of Lord and Lady Ardcapell's marriage, the loss of which had been so much lamented by him at one of our later interviews. It presently occurred to me, this might be one of the papers dropped upon the snow, by the individual we had formerly had the luck to rescue from the bear; and the surmise grew into a certainty, when I remembered that this was the very coat I had worn on that occasion, and never used since till now. How it had ever come into the keeping from which it had been reft by the discourteous gripe of Bruin, had been a mystery often pondered by me since, but never to a satisfactory conclusion.

I had carefully laid the document aside till the present time, and now looked over it again, to as little purpose as before, but still with the general impression it might one day be found of importance.

It may, furthermore, be proper here to apprise the reader that, immediately on my return from America, warm with my anxious feelings on the subject, I had waited on Mr. Dalham, and given him the full history of the events which had befallen Lord Ardcapell and his family. I drew his attention to the suspicions entertained by my deceased friend of the iniquitous designs of the nephew upon his daughter's rights, and finally requested his candid opinion, first, as to the probability of her being still living, and then as to that of recovering and restoring her to her rights.

Mr. Dalham, I may observe, had been re-appointed to his office of steward by Lord Leighton, and never having been in much favour with his nephew, who could have little hope of his countenancing his nefarious

schemes, evinced no reluctance to give the case that consideration which his clear duty to his patron, no less than the claims of an unforgotten friendship, demanded of him. "From all I have heard," said he, after taking time for deliberation, "I feel rather disposed to agree with your backwoods friend in entertaining hopes that this most important life is still unsacrificed; but if we would keep it so, and more, restore it to the sphere it was destined for, not one word, not one syllable must we breathe in contradiction to the common rumour of the day. Should our doubts of the event get wind, and Cyrus' suspicions be aroused, we shall have him thwarting us at every step, and perhaps settling the question in his own favour, by acts which I shudder to contemplate."

Such was the tenor of my interview with Mr. Dalham, whose views, coinciding as they did with my own, I was fully intent on prosecuting, when that mischievous youngster, Cupid, who delights in confounding schemes

he is not a party to, came into our councils as 'thirds man,' and drove our proceedings for a season all awry.

The object of his irresistible pleading was the second daughter of my worthy friend and privy councillor aforesaid, Susan by name, whose grace and condescension being equal to her other merits, my suit ere long ended in that intimate union which is apt to untune us to all but our own happiness.

Thus were our weighty schemes laid by for nearly thirteen years, till the thunder-cloud broke above me, and it was whilst yet travailing beneath its gloom, that the recollection of my half-forgotten vows was revived by the perusal of the newspaper.

The rest of the day was spent in making preparations for our journey, which, being the first for many years that had drawn me from my contentful home, I regarded with something of the interest that sparkled in the eyes of my little girl, and lent wings to all her evolutions.

Stowing ourselves, early on the morrow, in mine host's (of the Red Lion) landau, (which, the weather being fine, we preferred to a closed chaise) and depositing old Norman in an easy posture at our feet, we cheerily set forth on our pleasuring tour.

After crossing the bay of Morecambe, and admiring as we passed it the picturesque pile of Lancaster Castle, we consumed the greater part of the day in traversing the monotonous levels of lower Lancashire.

Travelling at moderate speed, it was late when we reached Liverpool, where, in one of its palatial hotels, we found all contentment for the night. Crossing the Mersey next morning, we shaped our course southwards, posting it in easy stages, relieved by ample intervals of rest, and terminated our day's travel by an early hour in the afternoon, at an Inn which had caught my fancy, on the roadside.

It was one of those quaint old structures that are now becoming notable from their

very rarity, surrounded by a level champaign country, agreeably diversified by plantations, amongst which I had caught some glimpses of a noble looking Elizabethan mansion, whose chimneys were still visible from the front of the hostelry. The landlord, in answer to my inquiries, directed my attention to the sign over his door, where the wolf's head and pendant arrow sufficed to inform me, even without the aid of the underwritten title, that it was the seat of the Dallington family.

It had happened that circumstances in early life had rendered these arms familiar to me, and they were those, I now remembered, I had observed on the gun of the unhappy exile who had saved my life in America.

The present proprietor, the landlord informed me, was Mr. Clement Dallington, who owned an immense extent of the neighbouring country "I pay him a hundred a year for yon cranky Inn o' mine, which ne'er a customer comes near now-a-days but just the

neebour folk, for fear, I trow, of its falling down about their lugs, but if it gets no more grist than it has o' late I'se e'en gie it up, and there an end on't; the Squire'll lose an old tenant to be sure, for we've had the place now, myself and my foref'thers, for the better part of a hunder' years, but what (dropping his voice and looking round him) cares he for driving an ald rooster like me from his perch, after dinging his own blood out of the big house yonder? Ou!" concluded Boniface, with a peculiar shrug, "he's a crafty old brock is our Clem: but if he meets wi' another fool to pay his hunder pounds for getting beggared, he'll be even cleverer than folk tell on."

The inference I drew from all this was that the speaker had gone down in the world, and the squire did not stand very high in his good graces.

The evening promising fine, tho' a slight shower had fallen, just sufficient to call forth its choicest incense, after commending my

daughter to an early pillow, I took a short stroll with old Norman in the direction of the Hall.

The cooler air and tempered lights of evening, with the fragrance of the shrubberies through which I passed, yielded an agreeable relief to my spirits, somewhat jaded by the dust and dazzle of the turnpike. A delicious freshness breathed from the grassy margins of my path, and the hare and coney frisked on either hand with a boldness that seemed bred from long immunity.

The track at length ended in an open space, the centre of which was occupied by the edifice I had come to view. As I seated myself for more leisurely inspection under a branching lime, and enjoyed the fumes of my favourite Cuba, I could not help reflecting that often from scenes like these the casual wayfarer draws more delight than falls to the lot of their proprietor.

It is not yon pretentious pile, thought I, the pride of birth, or plentitude of wealth that

constitute the source and secret of life's happiness, but the quiet conscience, the well-cultured mind, and susceptibility to her simpler charms, which nature, while she offers to the eye, too often denies to the fruition of the worldling, and was winding up these musings with a few farewell whiffs of my weed, when an individual came by whose jaunty step, weather-stained red coat, and gamy cast of eye seemed to bespeak a huntsman.

"Does Mr. Dallington then keep hounds, my friend?" I enquired, as I returned the salute he offered.

"Nay, nay, he keeps nane now," he replied ; bringing himself to a halt by a pivot movement ; " a did keep hunds ance, but syne the young master met his end, he downa bide the vera sight on em."

"Has he had the misfortune then to lose a son?"

"Aye, that has a, and a sore cost it was for un ; a' brake his neck over anenst yon dyke, along o' that boggling filly 'Whitefoot.'

I tould t'young master she would never face the leap, and begged un on my knees to take the bay gelding instead, that wad ha' carried un o'er that and hell gate to boot, but a wadna' heed me, and they picked un up in the dead thraw not ten minutes afterwards. The devil founder that false footed jade, for she has lost the squire as brave a lad, and me as blythe a place as there is in the county."

"And he has given up hounds then in consequence?"

"Every lug; they're a' gone now, both hunds and huntsman, to his cousin Squire Dallington o' Lymbrook, and (lowering his voice) they say as these bonny broad acres 'll travel as far too, some day, and a' because a misbegotten b——h of a mare missed her footing," (and here a fresh round of execration was poured on the offending animal).

"You maybe, han't seen his honor a passing this way?" he enquired, after relieving his brisket of its burden. "I have a word,

for him from my master; ye see he's nae greatways blessed wi means, isn't master, but just keeps the hunds for t' neebours' sake, and if they don't come the more handsomely down wi't brass, I reckon the poor whelps 'll een have to pack, and Ro. Todhunter with them; it makes a conny gap in five hundred a year—a kennel o' two-score dogs, with oat-meal up at 60."

With this professional remark my sporting friend went his way, and throwing away the end of my havannah I rose to resume mine.

The clouds had again gathered overhead, and to escape a wetting I put forth my best speed on my return.

On nearing a rustic bridge that spanned a rivulet on my way, I found it necessary to halt till two persons who were advancing over it had crossed.

They were a gentleman and lady apparently in the prime of life, whose presence bore the decided impress of gentility, yet seemed to tell,

in the drooping form and unspringy step, of some hidden grief that was preying on their health and peace.

They courteously returned my salute on meeting, and narrowly scrutinizing them as they passed, I remarked the hair of the gentleman was grey, though he must have been yet under middle age, whilst the cheek of his companion, wan and colourless, was in too faithful keeping with the joyless and unobservant eye she bent upon me. "The brother and his bride," thought I, wheeling round to take another look at them; aye, yonder as I live (for I detected a family resemblance), go my dear friend Clem and my loving lady Su," on their unjoyful path; can it be that the brother's curse has fallen, and the usurper is drinking in his Eden of the cup he so cruelly administered? Verily there is a Nemesis that deals forth our lot on earth, adjusts her balances with hair weights, and assigns us our portions with hands of fire.

A smart shower which began to fall put a

sudden stop to my meditations, and I did not reach my quarters till I had received such a share of its offerings as rendered a change of outer garments necessary.

Ordering tea to a room that had a fire in it, I opened the door that the landlord seemed to indicate, and entered an ancient chamber with a bay-window at the further end, and my chief object of research—a fire—smouldering amidst its embers on the hearth.

With the aid of some fresh fuel and an effective pair of bellows I speedily raised a cheerful blaze, and it was not till I had turned my back to this and was watching the effect of its flickering light on the quaint garniture of the apartment, that I became aware of its having another occupant.

This was an aged female, apparently in the last stage of life, who was seated in the recess of the window, her head resting on her hand, in which was still held the thread she had been lately winding from her spinning wheel, and her whole attention absorbed in the con-

templation of the outward view which, illuminated by the now risen moon, presented in its midst the pale drawn picture of Dallington Hall.

The infirmities of age had probably impaired her hearing, and it was only on my drawing near to apologise for my unwitting intrusion, that she bent on me a look of gradual consciousness.

"A bra' night, sir," she said, winding up her thread, and laying aside her wheel, "wad ye tak' a seat? I ha' been looking at the auld place syne sunset."

Seating myself for a moment in the bay, I again apologised for invading her room, but discoursing with her own thoughts, she proceeded without heeding my excuses:

"I saw ye fore-gathering with the squire and his leddy at the brig end c'en now, and ye looked ahint ye as if ye wad ha' liked to ken mair o' them; is't not sae?"

I smiled at the correctness of the old woman's observation, whilst she continued:

"See, yonder they go, with heavy hearts I trow, into the big house, which is a' their ain at last, and nane o' their kin ower nigh to scaur them with canny welcomes."

I was somewhat struck with the tone of the old woman's remarks, who, catching my thoughts, probably from my countenance, observed :

"I'm no o' these parts by birth, sir. I'm a north-country woman, and was fourscore years and ten last April day, and the better part o' these ha' I spent in yon bigging before us, which to my mind is the brightest and bonniest spot in a' creation; but, ay me! there's aye a dark corner in ilka house, and sair to say oftenest nigh the hearth-stane."

"You are well acquainted then with the Dallington family?" I remarked, as she paused to sigh.

"Acquent wi't! ilka ane o' the bonny bairns ha' I dandled i' these old arms, and now after guiding them up fra' babbies, and spending the best part o' my life in sarving em, they

maun send me hither to wear out what's left amang strangers; but I winna wrang the puir bairns—weel, I wot it's only ane of them wad ha' done it, and weel, I wot wherefore, but if puir Edmund meets wi' nae friend else, he shall aye find ane as lang as Ailie Jordan lasts abune grund."

"And who then is this Edmund?" I enquired. "I believe it has been my fortune to meet with him heretofore, and I take a strong interest in his history."

"Wha was he! look ye here, sir," she replied, fumbling with her fleshless fingers about her bosom, and at length putting before me a well-executed miniature; "that's wha he was, the eldest son of Sir Edmund as was, and brother to this present Clement, and ane thing mair," she added, uttering the words in a low emphatic tone, "he was and is, and I'll ever uphaud him to be (for all that's come and gane) the true and lawfu' maister of Dallington Ha'."

After pausing awhile to recover from the

emotion with which she had spoken, she proceeded :

“ But I think ye said, sir, ye had been acquainted wi’ m i’ former times ; wad ye tell now his auld nurse (for I ha’ tended him fra’ a weanlin’) a’ ye ken o’ my poor bairn ?”

I hesitated a moment to comply, for I felt that the picture I should give could neither be softened nor disguised, and ultimately I gave it in the simple guise of truth, which so wrought upon the old woman’s feelings that, bowing her head upon her knees, she wept in the utmost abandonment.

Anxious to soothe her unavailing grief, I ordered the tea-things, which had already been laid elsewhere, to be brought into the chamber, and after severally solacing ourselves with a cup of the reviving fluid, I requested to have the history of her foster-child, which, simplified for the reader’s benefit, was as follows :—

The eldest son of a Baronet of long descent and large property, it was generally expected

that, with the name, Edmund Dallington would have succeeded to the estate of his father, and hoped also by the family connections, to the position and influence acquired by the latter in the political world, as well. This prospect, however, as he grew up, became more and more doubtful of being realized.

Though far from wanting in good qualities, both of heart and head, evincing indeed occasionally marks of talent, as always of generosity, they were all in a great measure marred by a certain frivolity of mood, caprice of conduct, which at times took so much the form of imbecility as to afford matter of derisive comment to the circle of his associates and relatives. It was supposed by many (perhaps by most) that with the family acres, he had inherited an eccentricity of character which at intervals, that seemed partly periodic, had heretofore manifested itself in his line of ancestry.

As the natural result of a tendency to

mischoose his intimates, the confidence too rashly yielded, too largely lavished, had been often abused—so often, that withdrawing it by degrees from its first (and as he deemed less worthy) objects, he reposed it at last (and where is the human heart that seeks not a quarter to do this?) in concentrated strength and fullest measure on his brother next in age, Clement, whose silent profundity of character had sometimes worn the semblance of regard.

Thus, on the death of the head of the family and dispersion of its members, he had warmly invited the latter to remain as part of his household, and assist him in the management of his estates. This offer was accepted in a spirit and with an object truly diabolical.

The first act of the younger brother's gratitude was to possess himself of the affections of a young lady, who had long been an inmate of the Hall, as ward of the late baronet, and universally considered the affianced bride of the present. Hitherto she had given every

proof of a true reciprocity of affection, and notwithstanding the peculiarities of her lover, maintained her faith unshaken ; but the female heart is naturally facile, and the Mephistophelean brother so cunningly played his cards that in no great length of time he found the game his own. Whilst urging an ardent suit on his own behalf he infected her mind with suspicions of her former suitor's sanity, and it was only after its consummation that this double treason of his nearest blood relation and betrothed bride accidentally came to the knowledge of its victim. This was not all ; whilst suffering under the intolerable anguish produced by this discovery, in fact, in a condition to give the fullest colour to their views, two medical practitioners, suborned by the chief conspirator, were introduced into the house in the character of guests, and succeeded in establishing a charge of insanity against his unhappy kinsman, by which he was virtually deprived of his inheritance, and

committed to the uncontrolled custody of his arch enemy.

This was too much for a mind already tottering under its former blows, and seizing an early opportunity he effected his escape from confinement, and in his native land at least was never heard of more.

Such was the domestic tragedy that sent its victim an exile into the wilderness, and many there are, doubtless, like it, little heeded in this gadding world, but seen and noted by the all-kenning Judge, who sooner or later metes our plenteous retribution.

"They ha' sent me hither," wound up the old nurse, "into the land of Egypt, as I may ca't, for saying what I've said to you, as if wi' my puir breath they could squinch the justice of the Lord in heaven, but He takes the evil doer in he's ain devices. I'm four score years and ten, and my auld een grow dim, but as sure as I see yon bonny bigging now, I see His rod at wark upon its maister."

CHAPTER II.

It was well on towards noon next day ere we were again fairly on the road.

The delay, however, was little important, as our day's journey was to be but a short one, and we should reach our goal early in the evening—a time I always preferred for doffing travelling harness, and looking through the localities we had arrived at.

Our route lay through a rich agricultural district, resembling in the eyes of my companion the neighbourhood of her home, though touched by nature with a kindlier glow, whilst

exhibiting less largely the evidences of ingenious industry.

As we rolled over a country of unvaried flatness, mile succeeding mile of alternating grass and corn fields, I involuntarily began contrasting its appearance with the pine-covered wilds of New Brunswick, which had so often and profoundly impressed me.

The tedious levels we were traversing had doubtless in their time been sheathed in similar fashion, the pine and the oak succeeding each other for centuries in silent vegetation and decay, till the race of man would multiply among their glades, the hut and the cottage send forth their signal smokes, and civilization, axe in hand, annihilate the last vestiges of the wilderness. Such, in the lapse of ages, had been its fate, and such would be that of the regions I had trodden in the new world, locked up as they now were in a dominant forest growth, beneath which I had myself wandered for weeks together, and over whose top a squirrel might skip its hundred

leagues without descending from its leafy carpet.

Following this train of meditation I again found myself planted in the well remembered clearing of the Far Pines, reviewed its deserted tenement, and was pensively replacing in its doorway the infantile form which had so often welcomed me, and furnished such frequent cause of subsequent anxiety, when an exclamation from my little girl awakened me to the present scene and epoch.

"O, papa!" pointing to a majestic edifice, about a mile in front, "look what a beautiful house! that must be a lord's house, pa—see how big it is!"

"Leighton Castle, as I live," I cried, rousing myself from my reverie, and collecting my senses to make an earnest survey of a spot which, as the reader may imagine, was for manifold reasons deeply interesting to me. Old Norman also got upon his legs, and resting his grizzled head on the carriage door, looked out upon the broad domain we were

passing with eyes that, for the moment, sloughed the film of age, and nostrils whose active play seemed to speak recognition of the air of his puppyhood.

Many features now occurred which vividly renewed the impressions made upon my mind during the perusal of my friend's M.S.

There was the spacious park, with the 'vernal green triumphing over the brown drapery of winter'—there the 'majestic oaks with their low breathed sighs and interwoven boughs'—now the music of purling rills met the ear, and at length the ornamental sheet of water with the stately pile upon its banks rewarded my earnest gaze.

An extensive grove of trees, threatening to intercept my view and destroy the impressions it occasioned, "Stop!" I cried out peremptorily to the postilion, "stop, on your life." The man pulled up with something of the startled air with which he would have answered a highwayman's "stand and deliver!" With an interest that might almost have been called

personal, I gave myself to the examination of the various features of the prospect.

Along this road, thought I, passed the young tutor Etheredge, on his introductory visit to Leighton; along this road—enchanted then to him—he wended so often after in the agreeable enthrallment of first love; across those lawns moved his lovely mistress, with the light hearted grace of girlhood; and before me I beheld the water where he saved her life and well nigh lost his own.

Norman on his part had been far from an uninterested observer of the scene, but rising with his fore paws on the chaise door, had scrutinized the objects I had noted with an apparent affinity of feeling. Spying a couple of dogs in the park gambolling round a figure that seemed that of a keeper, he emitted (the first time for a good twelvemonth) an obsolete half abortive howl, intended for a bark, which was answered by the others with high and resonant yellings, as though in derision of his superannuated efforts.

The trio passed on, and other groups became observable dotting the grounds in various directions.

I now remembered it was the festival week, and ordered the driver to proceed at once to the hotel that we might learn betimes our chance of accommodation.

Passing the park gate, where I was half prepared to see the barouche issue forth with its charming inmate, we drew up at a plain substantial building which bore the arms of the neighbouring peer, and were received with something of old-fashioned courtesy by its landlady, Mrs. Marton.

On enquiring our prospects of entertainment, we were informed they depended entirely (the place having been unusually full for some days past) upon the departure of a party whose intentions were as yet unknown.

While making my interrogations I felt a familiar touch on the shoulder, and turning round encountered the "confirmed" visage

of my friend and father-in-law, Mr. Dalham. After the usual felicitations of the meeting :

"I can settle," he said, "Mrs. Marton's difficulty at once ; her guests are clients of mine, and are about to depart almost instantly. I am unfortunately obliged to accompany them, having business to transact at ———, but I will walk over here to-morrow evening and take tea with you."

I urged him to come and share a bottle of port with me at dinner, but this he thought he could scarce accomplish, "as our new married heir presumptive," said he, emphasizing the word, "is to give his grand regale to the farmers to-morrow, and I shall have to attend in virtue of my office. If you should feel disposed to join us, I think I can manage to secure a chair for you ; I come over here," he added, seeing his friends approach, "as seldom as I can, for though poor old Lord Leighton regards me, I believe, with friendly feelings, the 'rising sun,' for certain reasons

of his own, turns on his humble servant a somewhat clouded face."

His friends now came up, and our luggage having been removed and the post-boy paid, we entered the inn and were shown into an upper chamber, which commanded a fine view of the adjoining domain.

It was now about half-past four p.m., and as the most suitable refreshment, after a hot drive in the morning sun, we ordered tea.

Whilst the hostess was arranging the tray, I remarked to her how large an assemblage of company her noble landlord seemed to be entertaining.

"Aye, sir, there's a deal of quality folk come down to the merry-makings, but he doesn't much fash himself about them; indeed, you may see him walking about his grounds more like a stranger himself than the master of well nigh half the county. Poor gentleman, he has never been rightly his own man since that sad business of leddy Lowra's

—it has fairly ta'en the heart out of him; gentle or simple, we must all have our crosses. We've some nice cold chicken, sir, and a real Leighton ham, if yourself or the young lady has a fancy that way; we fatten them on the mast of the park oaks yonder. Ah, he was ever our kind landlord, the poor old Earl; but if he takes on as he has done o' late, I fear his days will be but short in the land; we shall see different times, I trow, when he is gone;" and hearing herself summoned from below, our good hostess now left us to our refection, with a valedictory "Try the ham, sir?"

When seasoned by a sufficient amount of exercise, there is no little enjoyment to be found in "taking one's ease in his Inn," a truth we proved to our satisfaction in the hour we devoted to the purpose.

It was a beautiful spring evening, and refreshed by the showers of the previous night, a miscellany of sweetest perfumes from sweet-briar, wallflower, rose and hawthorn, stole

upon the senses through the open casement. From the throngs in the neighbouring grounds were heard the distance-softened sounds of careless conversation or light-hearted laughter, whilst troops of pleasure-seekers strolled along the road hard by, whose festal airs seemed chidden by the sober looks of the hard-worked and home-returning peasant.

As it was desirable to make the most of the evening, we remained no longer over our meal than was necessary, and my daughter appearing unfatigued by her short day's work, I took her hand and walked into the park, paged as usual by the aged bloodhound.

The place had, by this, assumed a somewhat deserted look, the groups that had thronged it having imperceptibly drained away. The sound of music in the direction of the castle served presently to explain the mystery, the guests having probably exchanged the open air for entertainment of a more special kind within doors.

This circumstance I did not much regret,

wishing to enjoy undisturbed the beauties of the deserted scene, and meditations it naturally gave rise to.

Little Susan, in the briskest spirits, had been gambolling on the turf with Norman, and as I entered a shady alley that diverged from the main road, ran ahead after the old dog, which had suddenly taken the lead. The sounds of persons speaking presently met my ear, and as I drew near a retired arbour a little apart from the pathway, I heard a voice exclaim in earnest tones, "In the name of G—d, child, where got you this?"

On arriving at the spot a striking scene presented itself.

My old time-stricken hound was standing with his fore paws on the knees of an old gentleman, who was seated in the recess, holding in his hand my friend Lord Ardcapell's locket, which I had somewhat incautiously entrusted to my little girl, and by her in a fit of sportiveness, had been slipped round the animal's neck. The young truant herself

was standing beside the dog, and in course of being questioned after the above fashion as I made my appearance.

"In the name of Heaven, where got you this?" repeated the old man. He was habited in plain attire, his hat lay on the bench beside him, and whilst with one hand he grasped my valued souvenir, with the other rested on a walking-stick in the attitude of one lately roused from meditation. His air and presence were singularly venerable, and bore every token of having once been noble and commanding.

The extreme whiteness of his hair seemed to tell of something more than age, so remarkably was it contrasted with the vivid brilliancy of his hazel eye, which, though betokening unusual fire and force of mind, was crossed from time to time by what seemed the shooting lights of some operant sorrow or internal strife.

Regarding the miniature he held with a fixed and earnest gaze, he addressed this

second question to myself as I came up, and waited with suspended breath for a reply.

"It is a portrait," I returned, "of a valued friend of mine who died many years ago abroad, but whose virtues are still cherished by those who had the happiness to know her."

"Her name?"

"Was Jermyn."

"Ah, then, it cannot be, yet how like! it is the very face of my poor pet; yea, as I live, it must be she; did you not say her name was Farle—that is, Etheredge?"

"Her name, sir," (catching a suspicion as to how the case stood) "when I knew her, was Jermyn; she was the wife of a friend I had of that name, entirely worthy of her, and now also long since dead."

"'Tis strange! those are my Laura's very lineaments—her look, and that presented by no common skill; this dog, too, seems to have a cast of her favourite hound about it; ho! Norman, how now, old boy?" patting the

animal's head, which briskened up, wagged its tail, and looked more like old Norman than ever. "He must have been dead, too, though long ago, the all that would remain to her of the sports and loves of Leighton! Alack! how our feelings fool us!"

The old man sighed—he thought he had been mocked by that mirage which haunts the desolations of the soul like those of nature, the phantoms of fond and unfulfilled desire—but he was wrong; that was indeed his daughter's image, and that the living identity of her favourite, but many cogent reasons compelled me to withhold the truth from him.

"Would it be trenching," he added, "too much on your generosity, to beg (if I might not buy) this object of you? It is for various reasons of much interest to me."

"Pardon me," I replied, "if I say I cannot part with a memorial I so greatly value."

"Whatever reason you may have for prizing it, the person who now speaks to you

has at least a hundred fold. You will not at least refuse it to me for a few days, that I may have a copy taken by an artist of repute now in the neighbourhood; my name is Philip Farleton, and I live in that large house yonder by the water."

I could not well avoid complying with this moderate request, so detached the locket from the dog's neck, and gave it him, mentioning at the same time, that as my stay would be but brief I should wish to have it returned as soon as possible. This he engaged should be done, and added that if I had come hither in honor of his nephew's nuptials he should think himself favoured by my being his guest till the work was finished.

This arrangement I had my own reasons for declining, which I did in terms of due courtesy, and then proceeded on my ramble.

As we seated ourselves in the course of it under a noble oak that stood in front of the ancient part of the mansion, and which I had every reason to believe was the "trysting

tree," mentioned in the memoir, my thoughts naturally recurred to the recent scene and the interesting old man I had just parted from. He, too, feels no less than "My dear friend, Clem," that the wealth he holds is of little avail to fill up the void left by his daughter's loss; the bauble he has begged of me is probably now more prized than all his vast possessions put together.

Of all the evils that embitter life and render its enjoyments valueless, among the foremost stand the rankling griefs of family schisms and severances. Most of our ills we can meet beyond our thresholds, and quell or submit to with unblenching spirits, but these assail us at our very hearthstones, divide ourselves against ourselves, and kindle in the breast that civil strife which admits neither of triumph nor escape.

There is that in the father's eye that tells too plainly of this cruel warfare, yet something withal that seems to show the better instincts of his nature had revived in him, and

that could his banished child have been restored, it would have been a day of holiest triumph to them both. This fate, alas, forbade, but what if her daughter—the young fawn—could be discovered to rekindle the old man's life and cheer its declining stage? Could this but be, could the tone of his existence be renewed, and those halls now ringing with the mirth of strangers—and broad estates on the point of passing to a reprobate, be retained to his line and reopened to his enjoyment, it were worth devoting half a life-time to accomplish it.

As the evening advanced, the moon had lighted up the nearer portion of the castle, and I perceived my daughter gazing with a look of awe at its frowning bastions and beetling wall. The ivy was rustling on its battlements—the ensign of their ravager—time. After the close siege of centuries he had stormed the strong place at last, and his banner waving in the night-wind over ramparts breached by his artillery, presented an

emphatic picture of the might that "overcometh all things."

Immersed in meditations arising from my late rencontre, and tempered with a pleasing sadness by the grave yet lovely scene I looked at—suggesting many a moral to my thoughts—the time wore imperceptibly on till the increased bustle at the mansion, the twinkling of bells, and the flashing of lights bespoke the end of the entertainment and departure of the guests. Admonished of the lateness of the hour, we put ourselves abruptly in motion, and shortly after reaching the park road fell in with the main file of the retiring throng.

"Well," said a well-dressed young man in front, who had the air of a country clergyman, "he has done his best to please us, that's certain, and amidst such a motley crowd it was truly no easy task; but to my taste he over-does it—he seems as if he were acting a part, and I should not wonder after all if he hid a fair share of teeth and claws beneath all those smiles and suavities."

“Aye, aye,” observed an old top-booted farmer, behind me, to his companion, “a’s varra weel—a’s a’ varra weel of’s outwards, but holler, holler—washed metal I doubt; I seed him laughing thro the tail of’s ’ee, at these boots o’ mine, as who should say that’s not the sort o’ gear for this spot; but I can tell his squireship, for he’s nae lord after all, this is not the first time they’ve stood there, and afore better men than himself too; for I was at the old Arl’s wedding now nigh forty year ago, when top-boots was considered a pleasin’ featur’, and there was always a glass o’ grog in store when folk got their fill o’ caperin’. Lord knows I did what I could i’ that way, but a sma’ matter winds me now, and wad ye believe it, all I could lay hold on for the love o’ —— was a savvy biscuit and some sour pump water; times is sadly altering, to my mind, Cuddy.”

These observations of the old agriculturist were accompanied by sundry lurches to the right and left which, to those fond of referring

to first causes, might have inspired some doubt as to the limited extent of his indulgences.

Fearful lest some of his evolutions might jeopardize my little charge, I made a flank movement and fell to the rear. Two old women were hobbling on with the slow and difficult steps of age.

"Nay, cummer," replied one to something addressed to her by the other, "it doesn't stir my heart a bit as it used to—a' this feasting and dancing, and merry making—for I ken too weel what it a' ends in. It seems but yesterday the ould 'Arl (Lord Farleton 'a was then) had *his* time on't, and the bonny young bride cam' down fro' Lunnon and made all our hearts as lightsome as her own; weel, cummer, ye ken as weel as me how afore the year was out she was ligging stiff and stark in the churchyard. E'en sae that winsome young quean, ledly Lowra, (it fairly gives me the heart grip to think on't,) it was after one o' these unsonsy frolics she was spirited away.

by her teacher, and what has become o' the bonny bird none seem to ken or care for ; and sae, cummer, when I see a' these vanities astir I say, let the young squire look ahint him as weel as forrards, and tak' heed a' na come by a slip as weel as 's kinsfold."

We had by this entered the high road nearly "opposite our hotel," whose welcome accommodation we lost no time in resorting to.

CHAPTER III.

THE next day broke favorably for the event that was chiefly to signalise it in the quiet neighbourhood of Leighton, viz., the entertainment of the Earl's numerous tenantry by their prospective landlord.

I was awakened at an early hour by the cawing of the rooks, as they fluttered and fought round the oak trees that held their nests and young, making the air echo with pleasant and beseeching music.

As it seemed to convey a tacit reproach on my own indolence, I forthwith arose, and,

sketch book in hand, went forth to enjoy the beauties of the park by sunrise.

Overcome by the indulgences of the previous day not a soul was as yet abroad, and choosing the first path that presented itself, I sauntered along in quest of a subject for my pencil. The grass being too long and wet to venture on, I found my range in this respect somewhat restricted, and moreover had not been long upon the move when I felt the unpleasant conviction I was being followed.

Now guides to prescribe one's steps, and hangers on to haunt them, have ever been viewed by me in the light of especial nuisances. In the present case, moreover, considering the promiscuous nature of the crowds gathered by the occasion, I thought it not improbable I might have been selected through some mistake by the police as an appropriate object for their attentions.

Feeling after awhile somewhat out of humour at this surveillance I retraced my steps, and on meeting my persevering follower, en-

quired whether I was trespassing that he considered it needful to give such close attendance. The fellow, who was a square-set, strong-looking rustic, dressed after the fashion of a gamekeeper, looked rather sheepish at my challenge, stammered out something about his being "fond o' lookin at a fine dog," referring to Norman who was with me, "that that un' there was so like a prime cretur' he had been acquen' wi' some long time ago he could a most ha' sworn it had been the same. Supposed there was some mistake, but hoped there was no offence," and with a good many reverted looks proceeded under correction on his way.

The object of his interest during this short dialogue had on his own part been describing sundry circles round the speaker, which, taken together with its side long glances, half-wary, half-familiar, could they have been rendered into "King's English," would, as it seemed to me, have made a pretty close counterpart of his own speech.

When he rejoined me there was a sly sparkle in the corner of his old eyes, as though he were enjoying a quiet joke in his own way.

It presently occurred to me that our best plan of proceedings would be to get an early breakfast, and then pursue our walk on an extended scale through the grounds and neighbourhood until noon, when we might either join the dinner party or rest ourselves at the inn as we thought best. I therefore returned, and after a substantial meal set forth once more with my daughter on our round of exploration.

Some furlongs from the hotel we turned up a bye lane that seemed to be the boundary on that side of the park, and after following it for a mile or so reached a bridge that spanned a well sized brook, and commanded on either hand a bewitching view of green and dew-sprent meads, over which the fine spring morning was shedding its early blandishments.

Spreading my cloak upon the parapet we seated ourselves thereon, and admired at our

ease this choice morceau of English landscape. The green and juicy meadows were still floating with the undispersed night mists, which, permeated by the early sunbeams, shone doubly white and luminous, amusing the eye with the fantastic wreaths they sent athwart the neighbouring woods. A herd of kine, as they stood by their still marked lairs, were lowing impatiently for the milkmaid, and blended their sonorous music with the murmurs of the brook beneath us. On the greensward of the meadows innumerable flowers became one by one discernible through the thinning vapour, the primrose and hyacinth pre-eminent, enchanting the eye with their simple yet inexplicable beauty, and impressing the heart and senses with an irresistible sentiment of happiness.

While listening to the Castle breakfast bell as it sent its jocund echoes through this Claude-like scene, a six-horse wain, laden with heavy furniture, came up, and the leaders, through the driver's heedlessness, making a

sudden side-move to the bridge end, where there was a watering-place, confined us, together with two young ladies who had casually come up at the moment, to a narrow space beside the parapet, which the ponderous wheels of the vehicle were now threatening to invade.

The little wall, from the sharpness of its coping, offering no standing place, I took my little girl in my arms and leaped over it into the brook below, which happened fortunately to be shallow, calling upon my companions to do the same.

One of them following my advice, was duly received in my arms ; but the other, overcome by her alarm, remained motionless where she stood, and would probably have incurred some serious injury, had it not been for the prompt action of the teamster, who, giving one shaft horse a smart stroke with his whip, and the other an adroit pull by the reins, suddenly diverted the waggon's course, and shortly brought it to a stand-still.

After giving a sharp rebuke to the lad, and due congratulations to the poor girl who had been placed in such imminent jeopardy, Susan and myself proceeded on our road, but had not taken many steps when a low call from one of the fair strangers again brought us to a stop. Hastily running up, she apologized for the trouble she had given me, and expressing her fear that I was wet, invited us to accompany herself and sister to her father's house, which she affirmed was close at hand.

As her manner was both frank and lady-like, and her surmise as to my state undoubtedly correct, I accepted the offer thankfully, and soon found myself at their abode, which proved to be the village parsonage, their father being vicar of the parish.

After a short statement of the occurrence that had introduced us to him, he received us with much amenity, supplied me with a change of nether raiment, and invited us to partake of an early dinner.

As it wanted, however, some hours to the

time, in order to fill up the interval, he proposed a stroll through his rather extensive garden, and (as he was occupied himself by business) commissioned Charlotte (the sprightly girl, who had been so alert in her movements at the bridge), to act as my conductress.

The grounds were laid out with considerable taste, and there being a good deal of rock about them, my charming guide pointed out how effectually this feature (such a stumbling block to most horticulturists), had been turned to account by her own and her sister's management.

"That is Fanny's bed," said she, showing me a raised border filled with choice and well-cared-for exotics; "and this," pointing to a range of rockery exquisitely disposed, "is mine. Fanny's taste is for foreigners, mine for natives; and yonder you see gathered all the wild flowers I have been able to procure for love or money, from all the wild and wasteful places in the land; I hope you admire them," she added, shaking her hair from her face, and smiling sunnily.

I assured her I did so vastly, and should rejoice to become a contributor to her collection, for the first of the two considerations she had mentioned.

"Here is one," plucking a wild geranium from its nest, and presenting it to me, "that came from the Peak of Derbyshire, and nearly cost me a broken neck in getting it; I assure you I had to jump almost my own height into a brook to do so."

Fanny here maliciously remarked, "Yes, and without falling so soft as you did to-day, either," which sent the blood into her sister's cheeks and covered her with momentary confusion.

Seeing something of a smile upon my face, produced by this little by-play, Fanny's glee became exuberant, and running to her own flower bed she nipped off a carnation, which she put into my hands, asking me which of the two offerings I liked the most.

Carefully inserting it in my other lappel, I assured her I was an admirer of beauty in every form, both native and exotic, vegetable

and animal, and could not help regarding the two flowers as emblems of the handsome donors.

“ There—if you had not made so dutiful an answer I question whether I should have restored you this precious casket (handing me a cigar case I had left behind while changing my clothes) which I suppose is intended for some of the vegetable beauties you venerate, in an embalmed state. Now, as we don’t admit Mrs. Grundy into these grounds, you have our free permission to use and enjoy the contents as you list ; in fact, we rather like the smell than otherwise in the open air.”

I immediately shewed my sense of their condescension by lighting a weed at once, and proceeded with my two guides on our perambulations.

Charlotte evidently enjoyed her functions, and her lively humour and *naïve* air had, I confess, a decidedly animating effect upon myself. Now, she shot down some shady alley, and was back again ere I had taken

three steps in her wake; now she peered into the beehives whilst rapidly relating some anecdote connected with them; then called her pet fowls around her and fed them with wheat from her own pocket, and ended her achievements by climbing into an apple tree and tossing down some of the fairest fruit into my hat.

The dinner bell rang at last, and like many other aspiring characters, poor Charlotte found it more easy to mount to than descend from her elevation. "Now, Charly," quoth her bantering sister from underneath, "You're fast again; I knew you would be getting into a dilemma, and there you are in the very horns as it were; never mind, you are a sure card at leaping, and here is Mr. Ruysdale with his arms open, all ready to break your fall again."

"Upon my word, Fanny, you get more wicked every day; I won't trouble Mr. Ruysdale this turn; I might spoil the precious carnation, my dear, as well as that cigar he seems to

be so much enjoying ; here's papa will play the good Samaritan," and into the paternal arms she accordingly descended with her raiment all torn, locks dishevelled, eyes like diamonds, and cheeks all fire.

Stimulated by our morning's exercise, we partook with much relish of the simple and wholesome fare we sat down to, and when the cloth was removed, with no less zest, of the bottle of good port that succeeded it.

The conversation recurred to the incidents of the morning, and from them passed to the proceedings at the castle, to which it appeared the waggon and its load were bound.

"Mr. Farleton," drily remarked my host as he shelled some nuts Fanny had cracked for him, "seems to be setting up grandee in good style, and if it were not for his wild unreliable nature we might augur a happy time for his new bride, who all agree is a very amiable woman ; set down, however, as she is, among half a dozen mistresses, I fear her beatitude will be of short duration, and the worm at

the core soon mocking the magnificence without. She has already condescended to visit us here.

"Yes, Mr. Ruysdale, and invited us over to the festivities, and naughty papa there wouldn't let us go."

"No," returned he, with a stern and austere air, "high as he is, and our next neighbour to boot (more the pity), none of my family shall ever share the hospitalities of Mr. Cyrus Farleton." He mused a moment and then added, "as I understand, you are nearly related to Mr. Dalham, who has long been chief agent of the family, and an intimate friend also of my own, I speak to you, as you no doubt perceive, with some degree of freedom on these matters. When we first came here, we (alluding to the former subject of his comments) were on very friendly terms together, and might yet have remained so, but for his making me, with a want of caution I cannot at all account for, a proposal (I suppose he thought he held the parish parson

between his finger and thumb) which I should want terms to designate as it deserves. I was offered considerable preferment, and Charlotte and Fanny there might have now been figuring in a far higher sphere if—”

“If what, papa?” cried the two girls in a breath.

“If only, children, your father would have consented to become a villain by tampering with certain records in his charge. Well, as you may conceive, I expressed my mind as both feeling and duty dictated, at this insult, as well as upon some other passages in his life which were matter of much scandal in the neighbourhood, and our friendly relations in consequence were brought to a decisive close. Not long ago, moreover, he one night nearly rode over my Charlotte as she was returning home from a sick visit, and aggravated his drunken heedlessness by language of the greatest insolence. So that, at present, between him and me there is, as I may say, a great gulf fixed, which neither of us I fancy

will much care to overpass. For himself, I have many misgivings, and unless he reforms (if that indeed may repair the past) am confident some of these clouds of strange suspicion that surround him, will discharge their lightnings some day, and finish his career in a way he little looks for."

Perceiving the sun slanting into the apartment, I at length made a motion to depart, whereupon our good host proposed to accompany us part of the way back, and rang the bell for his daughters' cloaks, which were presently brought in by a staid middle-aged domestic.

While the young ladies were mantling themselves, I remarked, "Mr. Farleton being such as you describe him, his succession to the estates must add greatly to Lord Leighton's regret at the loss of his amiable daughter."

"Undoubtedly, and to that of every one who knew her, besides; but whilst the old man is nursing a futile grief on this score, there are some hardy enough to affirm she is not

dead at all; others, that she died and left a child; and that old woman you saw in the room just now, stoutly maintains the ready-handed nephew has put both one and the other out of the way himself. As far as intrigue would serve his ends, I have my own reasons for believing he would not have scrupled a moment to employ it. The subject still retains so much of mystery that, notwithstanding the lapse of time, it is generally talked of by the neighbours in an under-breath."

Mr. Felton (such was my reverend entertainer's name) then took up his hat, bound with the widower's crape, somewhat dashed by time, and, together with his daughters, set me on my way through the glebe-land till we reached the turnpike road.

Here he took his leave, and here I bade adieu to the two charming girls whose acquaintance I had so suddenly made, pleading with much earnestness and many radiant smiles for its renewal. It was the last, how-

ever, I was destined to see of them. They were two of those stars that shoot across our path when least expected, gladdening us for the moment, and then, "like the lost Pleiad," meeting our gaze no more.

CHAPTER IV.

At the other side of the highway was the park postern, passing through which we directed our steps towards a grove we saw at some distance, where, from the loud voices that issued from it, conviviality seemed to have reached its climax.

The scene of revelry was a green glade almost enclosed by fine old oaks, where long tables had been laid out, well charged with solid and satisfying fare. Around them were seated the yeomen and gentry of the neighbourhood, who, having appeased the more pressing calls of appetite, were now dallying

over their wine, and listening with frequent plaudits (none the less lusty for its influence) to the address of an individual who was holding forth at the upper end of the board.

Not far from this position the quick eyes of my daughter soon discovered her grandfather, and, deeming myself privileged by the invitation he had given me, we availed ourselves of the first vacancy to take our places near him.

The chairman appeared to be bringing to a close an address he had been delivering to the company upon agricultural and other matters of mutual concernment.

His face, I fancied, was not wholly unfamiliar to me, though where and when I might have seen it altogether passed my recollection.

At the first practicable moment Dalham remarked to me (doubtless with a view to information) "Mr. Farleton's observations seem very just."

Mr. Farleton! that then was the Hon.

Cyrus Farleton, whose character and antecedents were so little qualified to gain my regard.

There seemed little in his appearance at first sight to justify this impression ; his speech was fluent and sensible, his manner easy and self-possessed, and his person, though not handsome, showing the fine traits and thorough-bred bearing of high birth ; but no one who watched his countenance closely could avoid being struck with its strongly vulpine cast (an impression strengthened by the colour of his hair and whiskers), or feeling after the survey that his chief instinct, his leading moral attribute, was craft.

The noisy cheers that graced his periods—mistimed and exaggerated, seemed more the effect of the good fare than any particular admiration of the speaker, and were easily intelligible when it was remembered that the hearers, being chiefly of the family tenantry, were precluded by their position from making large sacrifices to their sincerity.

Yet tho' above board there was shewn this general submission to the sentiments and position of the chairman, below it sounds of mutiny were heard which neither fear nor favor seemed availing to suppress.

As the speaker in the course of his peroration alluded to the growing infirmities of his uncle, touched on the family loss he had sustained, and announced his own assumption (by his lordship's wish) of the control and management of his property, he was greeted at every sentence from underneath by a low but most determined growl.

I was on thorns to think it might be poor old Norman thus misconducting himself, and attempted to administer a monition to him with my toe. The salute, however, by mischance, alighted on the shins of my top booted friend, farmer Topkins, who after lustily declaring his opinion that "The maut had got abune the meal wi' that chap anyhow," being himself concerned in liquor, lost his balance in attempting to rub the injured

part, and descended, amid the laughter of the company, to the *Dii inferi* of the dinner world, where being still further aggrieved by sundry kicks and pokes intended for the canine culprit, with his dolorous cries of "What are ye punchin' on—d'ye think one's made o' baggin'," he completed the hilarious disorder of the occasion.

There are probably few orators, who could have borne with equanimity interruptions so fatal to what was intended to be a fluent and effective harangue, and Cyrus Farleton was certainly not one of these elect.

His limited stock of patience being exhausted by the submahogany discord of the farmer and the dog, he angrily ordered the keeper to be called, and after a sound rating for neglect of duty, charged him to seize forthwith the latter animal and have him shot.

Deeming his words the effect of shortlived wrath, and not wishing to disturb the com-

pany, I resisted the impulse which I felt to interpose, and awaited the issue of the scene.

Submitting to the wonderful influence possessed by some individuals over the brute species, the animal, which had baffled all our efforts to unkennel it, came forth at the keeper's call, and a curious scene of silent gratulation followed; the man (for the moment oblivious of his orders), absorbed in a close inspection of the hound, the latter reciprocating his attentions with the greatest good will imaginable.

The irritated master, seeing what he considered this insolent trifling with his injunctions, repeated them in a still more peremptory tone, when the keeper, his eyes still fixed upon the dog, replied with more boldness than might have been expected.

"If it please your honor, I couldn't lay hands on the cretur no ways, for, howsoever, he's got here, it's old Norman himself come back, as sure as my name's Joe Blayfield."

"Norman, idiot! what Norman? you must

be as mad as the dog; take it, I say, and do my bidding, or you'll not be Joe Blayfield much longer in my service."

"Norman, your honor, as left us that sad time we lost ledgy Lowra, sixteen years ago and more; I could tell the pup, for all it has got so grey, among a thousand, for I wormed and waterclawed him myself, and barring age and that ugly wale along his ribs, there stands the ould warrior as on the day he left us, the best hound that ever laid nose to green-sward."

His master heard this speech with a passion that was rapidly mounting from the red to the white stage, and his next words were in the low deep tone that is usually the precursor of an explosion.

"Did you hear my orders, fellow, or not? Here, Smith, (in a thundering voice to an underkeeper), take that crazy brute from the crazier fool that holds it, and as you value your place let it be made safe before sunset, and harkee! as yon blockhead seems to have

lost the power of doing his duty, do you take it from him and be henceforth head keeper at Leighton."

"I hope your honor," replied the deposed but undaunted official, in respectful but earnest tone, "will think twice before you kill a cretur the 'arl always set so much store by, for it was leddy Lowra's favorite pup, and now its turned up its naeways unlikely, (for I trow it would ne'er ha left her), her leddyship may turn up wi't, for all folk say to the contrary; it's not all true that aye meet ane's lugs, and folk are sometimes killed afore they die, tho' nathless your honor kens best about that matter."

There seemed little in these words, uttered in all simplicity, to account to the greater part of the company for their extraordinary effect upon the person they were addressed to; I say, the greater part—for there was one exception, and that was myself.

As they were uttered, the hon. Cyrus Farleton remained in a state of astonished im-

mobility, with one hand clutching the glass before him, the other drawn up with clenched fingers, as though grasping an airy dagger, and his countenance, bereft of all coloring by the reaction of wrath, or some more fell emotion, turned with a vengeful stare upon the speaker. It was at this moment, when, facing his outspoken servant, the pallor of his features exposed the telltale scar in full relief, and presented his portrait in all its old significance, the astounding consciousness crept over me, that in the individual before me, I beheld the stranger we had rescued from the bear in America—the mysterious inmate of the woodland tavern.

I felt so confounded at this discovery that the fate of the hound, and further treatment of the offending hind were lost at once to my observation, which, as the disconcerted chairman recovered by degrees his composure, became fixed immoveably upon his countenance. As I thus gazed at it, there rushed into my

mind a crowd of confirmatory circumstances to assure me beyond all doubt of his identity, and fill me with a host of thoughts all tending to his crimination.

Whilst still absorbed in this mental recordation, insensible to all that passed around, I felt my arm nudged by my father-in-law, who must have been both scandalized and alarmed at my apparently strange demeanour, and now made me a motion to withdraw. Wrapt as I was in my thoughts, I mechanically complied.

"Are you not well, Philip?" asked he, in a tone of concern. "You did not take much wine, I think."

"He's a kidnapper," quoth I. (Susan). "A kidnapper, pa! A conspirator—a grasping, ruthless, conscienceless usurper—perhaps a murderer."

"Come, my dear sir, you are ill; you've been walking too long this morning on an empty stomach, and need medical aid."

"The dog too knew him—

'Can these things be,
And overcome us like a summer cloud,
Without our special wonder?'"

returned I, with my gaze turned towards the heavens.

He, on his part, after looking earnestly in my face, with a 'lunatico inquirendo' sort of expression, quietly led the way to an arbour near at hand, where we again seated ourselves and endeavoured to converse more coherently.

Susan was sent off to play, and I then informed him of the momentous discovery I had made, pointed out the conclusions to be drawn from it, and the wonderful light it gave us for fathoming the mystery to the bottom.

Inclined to credit the facts from matter within his own knowledge, he confessed it was the strongest *prima facie* case of multiform villany he had ever either heard or read of.

"But how are we to bring it home, my dear sir, how are we to bring it home?" he would repeat, musingly. "That is the ques-

tion; how is the lost one to be found? how, her identity to be established? we have a tangled skein to wind off yet, depend upon it."

I answered that to this duty which I considered sacred, and to which indeed I was virtually pledged, I intended from that moment to devote myself, nor would ask further time ere setting about it than was necessary to prepare myself for my task.

"If such be indeed your resolution, I will second you with all my power, and to-morrow shall perhaps be able to furnish you with means for more effectually carrying it out. Meet me, if possible, at Mr. Felton's by eleven o'clock in the forenoon."

We were about to separate when two persons walked past whom Dalham declared to be the two keepers, Blayfield and Smith, charged in all probability with the fate of the sentenced bloodhound.

The latter of the two was leading the dog in a leash, protesting he was fairly "banged"

how to deal with the "cretur;" that it went to his heart to "do for it," yet feared if he did not, that he should be as good as "done for" himself.

"Never fear a straw about the matter, Bill," answered Blayfield, "its time's not come yet, take my word for't. When th'ould master knows how the game stands (and know he shall afore another hour's past), I'll warrant its safe keeping to the last hair on its tail; and as for you and me, why th'ould lord made me what I am twenty year ago, and I much misken him if he's the man to fling off an old sarvant as he would a brast dog leash. He'll mind, too, the time when I larned her young leddyship to ride, and for as dead and gone as they say she is, that's a herb o' grace 'll heal many a sore for old Joe yet."

"Aye, but it mayn't sarve young Bill, though," returned the other.

"Hout away, man, keep thy doe's heart up. I'll get a word in for thee, never fear, and

make the old hound there carry us both out of the muck."

"Let us follow them," said Dalham to me, in a whisper, "and see what comes of this queer coil," and, taking my arm, led me at some little distance in their steps. On reaching the mansion the two functionaries disappeared among the offices, whilst ourselves proceeded onward towards the library, where my companion thought we might get a view through the windows of the coming scene.

A clump of shrubbery offering a suitable hiding-place, we ensconced ourselves therein, and had not waited many minutes when the sound of voices within showed the parties concerned had already got to business.

"Jump up there," said Dalham, pointing to a narrow light through which he had taken a short peep; "you'll get a better view of it; he's giving it him all by the square, sure enough."

Mounting to the ancient loophole he had

indicated, I obtained a full view of the noble apartment it lighted; but ere I had well observed its living occupants, my eyes became involuntarily fixed on an object that had far more interest for me.

Traced to the life by surpassing skill, and illumined by the yellow light that streamed through the opposite windows, hung the portrait of our withered lily of the back woods—Lady Ardcapell, taken at the age of girlhood, in the fancy costume of a wood nymph, her floating hair, flexile form and sprightly features presenting the most perfect embodiment of the character.

I was so entranced with my survey, that it required a pretty smart tug from my companion (who had heard steps approaching) to detach me from my perch. To his enquiry as to how matters had gone off inside, I was compelled to confess my utter ignorance, having neither seen nor heard anything that had passed.

The approaching steps proved to be those

of the two keepers, the elder one having rejoined his associate, and as far as we could judge by their discourse, achieved the desired success.

We were in hopes they would have passed without perceiving us, but the unlucky Norman having winded his master, soon discovered our concealment to the rangers, by his noisy freaks of salutation.

It appeared they were in quest of us, and Blayfield coming up to me enquired whether I was "the gen'leman as belonged to that there dog."

Having admitted the connection, he then gave me to understand the earl was desirous of speaking with me in the "libry."

Shrewdly suspecting what was the object of this invitation, I held a short consultation with Dalham ere giving a reply, when having agreed to suppress all facts that might encourage futile hope or awaken troublesome suspicion, I intimated to the man my readiness to attend his master.

On entering the library I found the aged nobleman slowly pacing it, absorbed in thought. After informing me he hoped to return my miniature on the morrow, he put several new questions to me as to the parties I had received it from. To these I answered as on the former occasion, giving a brief description of their place of abode, the manner in which I first made their acquaintance, and the circumstances attending their deaths (on these two latter points I observed the Earl to be much moved) and added that I had taken them at the time to be persons of superior station, forced probably by some family dissension or distress into a sphere of life so uncongenial to their character and unfavorable to their prospects.

Lord Leighton, as I have said, listened to all this with much secret emotion, and then said, speaking to himself:—

“Ah, I fear there can be no doubt of it then; it has all fallen out as it is reported,

and the child you say (turning earnestly to me) perished in the fire."

Truth on the one hand forbidding me to affirm, and policy, to deny this, I briefly recounted the circumstances of my last visit to the Far Pines, and left him to draw his own conclusion.

It was of course anything but consolatory, and kept him some time in melancholy self-communion, then passing to the portrait on the wall, "That," said he, pointing to it sadly and solemnly, "is the lady whose miniature you possess, and whose favourite dog is lying at your feet; that is she whose funeral (he here experienced some difficulty in proceeding) you attended when the claims of nature were forgotten by her nearest kindred, and in that figure you see what was once, and might have been still, the cherished child of a foolish old man, had not pride and passion stepped between and—" the remainder of the speech was lost in a low self-accusing mutter.

"To one," he continued, after in some measure overcoming his feelings, "whose kind offices consoled her latter moments, it is needless to say how deep I feel my debt, and how pleased I should be if you could suggest any means of my repaying it."

I could only reply that any little service I had rendered was its own full reward, and ventured to add that though Providence tries us often with heavy losses, it generally has in store a restoration or a recompense.

Fearing lest I might become more communicative than was meet, I made an early movement of departure, and after receiving a pressing invitation to visit his lordship whenever my convenience allowed, took my leave.

Seldom has repose been more sedulously wooed than when I threw myself on my bed at the Leighton Arms that night, after the strange and stirring incidents of the day, but the skittish power eluded my embrace and left my mind a prey to the thick coming thoughts which they suggested. The various

scenes and circumstances I had witnessed in America, in relation to the plot so strangely brought to light, returned on me with the vivid force of yesterday. In particular, the clandestine presence of the chief culprit in the neighbourhood of those who were notoriously the main obstacles to his advancement; his ejaculations in the snow storm and at the tavern; above all, that damning sentence to one whose association was in itself a proof of guilt, "You shall have a dollar for every mile you take her," together with his apparition at Lord Ardcapell's window the night before his death, and possession of the all-important marriage certificate, recurred unceasingly to my mind, till they wove themselves by degrees into an harmonious web of evidence, which left not a tittle of doubt as to Cyrus Farleton's villany. Yes, under that roof within my view, he lay congratulating himself on his apparent fortune, and indulging in fond dreams of its continuance; whilst far over the wide Atlantic, my fancy sketched

his victim, abandoned to strange—perhaps barbarous keeping, yet guarded by a watchful Providence, and waiting but the call of opportunity to retrieve the full measure of her rights. “Be it mine,” was my conclusion, “to clear her path for doing so, and bring deliverance to the castaway.”

True to my appointment, I met my father-in-law next morning at the vicarage, and found his purpose was to take the examination of an old woman, whose knowledge was likely to be useful to us.

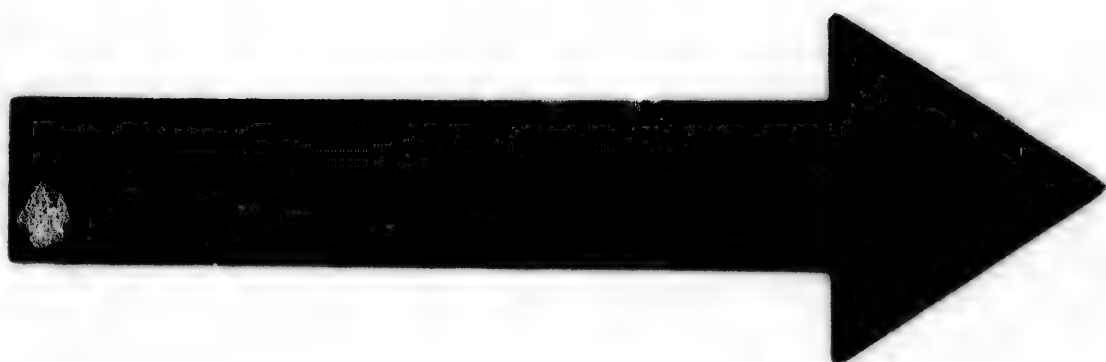
France Jeffray, the individual in question, had been nurse to Lord Ardcapell's infant daughter in London, and it was now our object to obtain a minute description (such as mothers and nurses alone can give) of her lost child. Meeting her in the garden, we retired to an adjacent summer house, and there, pencil in hand, Dalham took down her deposition, to assist which he even made a sketch of a child's figure, and caused the old woman with her own hand to note down what pecu-

liar marks she might remember in the right place. "Well, I mind that," said she, as she dotted down a mole on the neck, "and here was another on the top of the right shoulder, aye, and abune a' there was one here, (placing the pencil a little below the instep of the left foot) that I could tell her by 'mang a' the countless babbies o' creation; it was a red spot as cum' wi' her into the world, of the color of a cherry, and shape of a pear, tho' not much bigger than a hazel nut. But eh, sirs! what for is't ye ask such unsensy questions? The poor lassie has been in heaven I trow this many a year."

Dalham parried this query with the professional tact so useful for the purpose, and we then proceeded to the house, where after a long interview with Mr. Felton (who was a magistrate) a fair copy was made of the old nurse's deposition, and duly signed by her in our presence.

The essential portion of it I transcribed into my pocket book.

This matter being despatched, my next object was to procure some useful auxiliary in the rough and hazardous mission I had undertaken, and as I wended my way to the Inn, I vainly racked my brains to discover a likely instrument. As thus pondering, I passed the bridge where we had been jeopardized the day before, by the waggoner's carelessness, whom should I see seated on its parapet but the peccant individual himself. He was whistling vacantly, with his hands in his pockets, and had the half dogged, half-listless mien of one whose "occupation was gone" against his will. His countenance, nevertheless, seemed naturally of a good-humoured cast; he had a clear, well-opened eye, and a bodily frame, which though yet youthful, gave promise both of activity and strength. His alertness I had already witnessed. As far as outside went I thought I might meet with many a more unlikely subject than the present, and to judge how far the inside might conform, and the whole be made subservient



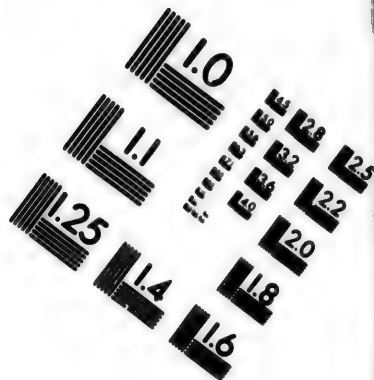
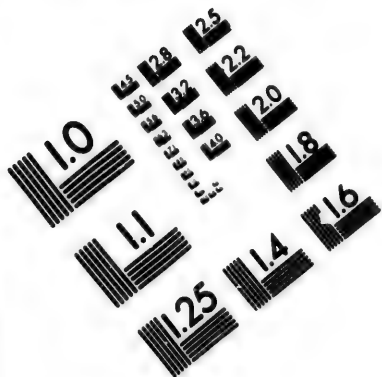
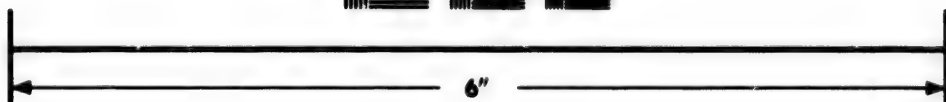
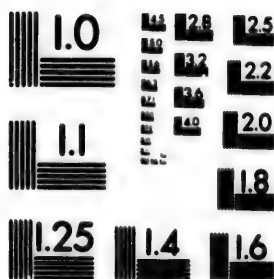


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to my plans, I determined to sound him by a few questions.

"Well, my lad," quoth I, "you had nearly got us into a hobble here yesterday; if you had been a trifle less handy with your whip I fear some of us would have rued it dearly?"

"Whoy, as far as that goes, maister, there's ane on us *has* rued it already."

"And who is that?" quo' I.

"Jeremiah Hood," quo he.

"And who may Jeremiah Hood be?"

"Mysel'."

"Have you rued it, my boy, how so?"

"Whoy, ye see t' tie thong o' t' wheelers brast wi' pullin' on't, and maister got mad at me for breakin it, and laid t' leather about my lugs, so I kittled hisn wi't whup, and then a' gied me notice to gang, and I 'een tuk un at 's word and here I be."

"Can you fire a gun off, and hit your mark when you do so?"

"Joe Blayfield 'll happen tell ye sae," replied he, with a cunning grin.

"What you've been taking shots at his game, eh? well, but you may be an honest fellow for all that; now I suppose you are on the look out for a new place; what say you to taking service with me?"

"Are you a hofficer, maister?"

"No, but you may have some warm work to go through notwithstanding, though not more than will fall to my own share."

"Well, that sounds fair, so I's 'een will'in' to take on wi' ye; an ye be fair I'll be faithfu', and wi' regard to work, syne work one must, I'm one o' them wad liever have it hot than heavy?"

"Bravely said, my lad, then here's some gold for you, go and get a new rig out at — and join me again at the Leighton Arms, this evening. But harkee, Hood, you must drop the Jeremiah for the nonce, and stand in my books as Robin."

My scheme of passing a holiday week at Leighton being broken up by the incidents before related, and all business despatched

that might facilitate my further operations, I remained but until the Earl returned the borrowed portrait, and having confided my daughter during my absence to the careful keeping of her grandfather, proceeded on my return homewards.

CHAPTER V.

WITHIN the week after my leaving Leighton I found myself, accompanied by my newly enlisted henchman, Robin, and a young bloodhound, by name Bran—nephew (as solemnly avouched by Blayfield) of the superannuated Norman, “once more upon the waters,” passenger in the swift-sailing schooner “Swallow,” bound for St. John’s, New Brunswick. There was every prospect of her making a speedy passage, the vessel being clipper built, and selected from a multitude I had myself examined, entirely on that account; my great object being to gain what time I

could in the voyage, that I might have so much the more to spare for my long pilgrimage on "terra firma."

It was with altogether different feelings that I now ploughed the brine from those experienced in my last outward bound voyage. The future was no longer seen through the golden haze of hope, or gay kaleidoscope of fancy—the heart no longer flushed with boyish dreams of bliss, or visionary projects of adventure. In the twelve years that had passed since then, my castles in the air had fallen before the hard realities of life, and, my views chastened by experience, I now entered on the work I had in hand, with that sober earnestness of mind which is at once the best voucher for success, and the easiest condition for achieving it.

It was while leaning against the taffrail one evening after a day of unusual calm, watching the heaving of the waters against the strip of light that skirted the western sky, that these and kindred reflections crossed my

mind, nor was it without something of regret I contrasted my "day" and "yesterday," the monotonous tranquillity of the former, with the vivid pulsations of the last. There are certain seasons and frames of mind when the *laudatio temporis acti* is more than usually operant with us, giving a factitious blazon to past events, and an equally false shadowing to the present.

This I suppose was one of them. It is possible also the train of my meditations might have caught something of the sombre colouring that pervaded external nature, and as the gloom of the hour increased, they were suddenly and perhaps salutarily put to flight by the Captain coming upon deck and calling out to the mate, in those sharp, decisive tones that bespeak emergency, "We must strike topmasts, Amos; it's coming on to blow; the glass is going down like the deep sea lead."

In obedience to their chief's commands, the men sprang forwards to their work with professional alacrity, and amidst the gather-

ing darkness used their best efforts to make the ship snug against the expected peril.

Being myself but an idler aboard, I withdrew out of their way, and lighting a second cigar remained astern, watching their agile movements and listening to the dull wash of the water against the vessel's sides, as, scarcely impelled along, it surrendered itself with flapping sails and creaking masts to the languid heavings of the ocean.

The ear, filled to satiety with the monotonous sounds, listened cravingly for some break in the brooding silence they seemed to deepen, and readily recognized in a hoarse and distant roar that at length reached it, the annunciation of the coming gale.

The Captain caught the sound almost at the same moment, and immediately ordered the crew who were engaged in battening down the hatches to take in the little canvas that was yet unfurled.

Whilst hurrying to their urgent task, the washy roar was heard rapidly nearing, and

ere they could secure the belated sheet to its spar, the blast broke furiously upon us, and saved them the trouble of doing so by blowing every stitch out of the bolt-ropes.

The schooner reeled under the sudden shock till the water came pouring over her lee bulwarks, and had not the cargo been stowed with unusual care the juncture would have been one of no little peril; being, however, snugly packed, the little craft immediately recovered herself, and commenced her rushing march over the seas that had already risen up around her.

Whilst pitching and bounding like a good sea boat as she was, before the furious and mounting blast, the mind could not fail to be impressed with the deep solemnity of the moment, as the mighty waves rolled by into the distance and the thick darkness that had suddenly come on, broken only by the little light in the binnacle, by paralyzing the power of sight enhanced the sensation of our helplessness.

To ensure efficient steerage (any interruption of which would instantly have laid us on our beam ends) four men were kept constantly at the wheel, and though seas were shipped from time to time, the vessel bravely held her way without mishap till near midnight, when a light became visible on the horizon.

Considering the latitude we were in, there could be little doubt it was a ship on fire, and as our own drew near (for we were scudding, and it lay directly to leeward) we discovered it to be a large barque, with its masts, rigging, and greater part of its hull one sheet of flame. It yet appeared to be under steerage way, the quarter-deck, crowded with people, being still kept to windward.

As heaving and falling with the wreck that fed it, the fire cast its lurid glow upon the scene, our fears for our own safety became momentarily lost in the contemplation of a doom so much more dreadful.

From the number of souls on board, it was evidently an emigrant ship, and the stern was

now seen thronged with these unhappy beings, already scorched by the approaching flames, and indebted, probably, to the virtue of some self-devoted helmsman for the short respite yet left them from destruction. Here, I say, they were gathered, the entire ship's company, agitated by every form of terror and despair known to the human breast. Here might be seen the attitude of prayer, gestures of ruffian violence, of unreasoning frenzy; for a moment even their mingled exclamations reached the ear, blending with the roaring of the wind and hissing of the water, as it dashed over the bulwarks on to the burning decks.

Extreme as was their strait, and harrowing as was the spectacle, we were unable, alas! to stir a finger for their relief. From the overpowering violence of the gale, it would have been impossible to round to, or get alongside, and could we even have done so, the volume of flame that wrapped the fated barque would inevitably have involved us in the same doom. All our boats, moreover, had been swept

away save one only, which was badly stove by floating spars, and those of the burning craft (taken, probably, by selfish fugitives) seemed also wanting.

As we passed like a phantom athwart her stern, three only of that wretched throng seemed to catch a momentary glimpse of us.

They were three women, who had clambered to the furthest foothold from the fire, and thence, desperate of human aid, appeared preparing to commit themselves to the less terrible of the two elements that threatened them. One held a child in her arm with maternal tenacity, whilst with the other she clung to one of the taffrail stanchions, thinking, perhaps, in that supreme moment, of her distant home and parted friends, which the appearance of our passing barque would yield a momentary hope of yet seeing again. The vivid cry of expectation, and wail of despair that followed it, with the attitude and anguish of the sufferer, haunted my memory for years after.

Wafted almost as soon as seen from this scene of agony we pursued our plunging course over the deep, the darkness that had for the moment been dispelled by the burning ship again enclosing us, and the fierce roar of the elements broken only by the crashing of some unstayed spar, or hollow noise of the water tumbling on our decks, until a little before morning, when a sharp, shrieking cry told us of one our seamen had been carried overboard by a tremendous sea that swept us from stem to stern.

The brief notice of his fate as it reached us thro' the hurly-burly of the storm and pitchy darkness, added not a little to the plenteous horrors of the scene.

At length the long craved-for light of morning began to show itself, and as it strengthened, the gale to show some symptoms of abating. Gradually the outlines of our rigging became visible, and sad indeed was the picture of ruin it presented. Our main mast had been snapped in two at the cross

trees, the mizen, gone by the board, and they now lay over the lee bulwarks impeding the steerage of the vessel and beating with hurtful violence against its sides.

The crew were immediately set to work with hatchets to clear away this obstruction, and whilst the captain was engaged in directing them, the mate came up to him with the alarming information that we had sprung a leak and already showed four feet water in the hold. As many hands as we could muster were now therefore transferred to the pumps, myself taking my turn among the rest, and we continued our exhausting labours till near noon, when it was found they were all being thrown away, and the water was slowly but steadily gaining upon us in spite of them.

The ship's fate, therefore, was decided; nor did our own seem less so, unless we could succeed in quitting her during the short interval allowed us. Our stove boat was the only means that presented itself of effecting this. It happened to be the long boat,

capable, had it been sound, of carrying the whole ship's company, but at present, as ill-luck would have it, in the most unseaworthy condition possible. However, the carpenter was set to work to make the best he could of so unpromising a job, and by dint of strenuous labour, and the effective help of two able hands among the crew, who had been fortunately bred to the same calling, it was in no great length of time patched, plugged, and fitted up so as to be thought capable of temporarily serving the purpose it was needed for.

Scarcely was this accomplished when the pumps were reported choked, and the ship to be showing signs of settling down by the head. There was, therefore, not a moment to be lost in despatching what was needful to be done ere quitting her.

Whilst the crew were using their best exertions to get the boat afloat, I hastened into the cabin, secured my bills, money, and what other valuables I had of a portable nature,

and thrusting a pistol into my belt, and giving another to Robin, reached the deck just in time to see our all-important long-boat successfully hoisted overboard, when it was safely swung round under our lee, and secured there by a strong hawser.

A barrel of biscuit and one of water were then hurriedly lowered down into it, the men (who had been unable to get into the fore-cabin for their kits) dropped one by one into their places, and after Robin and myself had followed their example, the skipper, who from a sense of duty was last to leave his vessel, descended also, shouting out sharply as he did so to cast off the tow-rope, as he believed she was on the point of going down. In this he was not mistaken, for scarce had we shoved the boat twice its own length from her stern, when, after giving two or three gulping lurches, the ill-fated craft sank down before our eyes, in the element she had so late breasted in her pride.

The sea was yet high, though the gale had

nearly ceased, and tried our cranky craft severely, but getting up a makeshift sail we set our course due west, hoping to fall in with some vessel ere our small store of provision should be consumed.

A little before sunset, as we were labouring along over the heavy swells, examining the ocean with anxious eyes, I discerned some object floating in relief against the bright sky ahead, which as we neared it I made out to be a hen-coop or some similar piece of lumber swept from a ship's deck, conveying a tale of storm or shipwreck. But this was not all; on this piece of lumber I beheld some object floating, which I scarce knew wherefore, aroused my interest; it might be a human creature, and as we were about to pass it some few points abeam, I requested the helmsman to steer in the direction that we might satisfy our doubts upon the matter. He was one of those unfortunately constituted beings, whose nature becomes "gnarled" by the crossings of adversity, and it was not without some

difficulty, and even a threat of resorting to my "shooting iron," that I succeeded in overcoming his perverseness, when, keeping near him to guard against evasion, I directed Robin to stand by and haul in the unknown object as soon as we should get alongside. This he cleverly effected, and presently increased our boat's company by a fine little boy about five years old, insensible, though still living, and clutching with drowning tenacity in his little hands fragments of the wicker-work that had been the immediate means of his preservation.

By dint of assiduous nursing, signs of returning consciousness ere long appeared, and at length he became able to inform us of what little he knew about himself. As far as we could gather from his broken parlance, he was the son of a Dorsetshire labourer, and with his parents and brothers and sisters, made part of the ill-starred freight of the emigrant ship. He told us that when the flames had no longer left them any foothold, his mother had jumped with him into the water, when in

his drowning struggles he had caught hold of the floating hen-coop, and clung thereto till rescued, the only one it was to be feared of the whole ship's company.

Robin and myself gladly gave the little fellow a share of our scanty rations, and then wrapping him up in a pea-coat, made him comparatively snug for the night.

The weather having now become almost calm, and the sea much gone down, we carried on under our lug-sail during the night, getting snatches of sleep as we sat, and ardently hoping that the morrow might bring some sail to take us up.

As soon as the morning light enabled us to scan the prospect, a seaman in the bow made the joyful discovery of a sail being in sight. Each dejected countenance now cleared up, and the further fact, scarcely less important, of its having sighted us was presently placed beyond a doubt by the reverberations of a gun reaching us over the heaving main. We soon beheld her bearing down towards us,

and as on our own part we had tacked about to fetch her, no long time elapsed ere we found ourselves under the yards of a fine Whitehaven brig, the captain of which received us with rough cordiality, and being bound to St. Johns as well as ourselves, made no difficulty in giving us a passage thither.

The remainder of our voyage was performed in safety, and we reached the port of our destination without further incident worth notice, on the morning of the twenty-fifth of June.

It may be remembered that in my former voyage I disembarked at Halifax, and reached St. Johns by crossing the Nova Scotian peninsula, a trip which, though found very agreeable at that period, was now from stress of time very willingly dispensed with.

The poor boy whom we had saved I placed in charge of a presbyterian minister of the place, who was known to the Captain, with my best hope that a life so specially

preserved by Providence would be blessed by a continuation of its mercies.

After equipping ourselves almost anew (a matter rendered necessary by our late losses from shipwreck) we now took boat up the St. Johns, following the route of my former journey, and remarking with satisfaction the advance made by the province in population and culture since that period.

Robin was vastly struck with the immeasurable woods he saw on every side, and whilst gazing on the novel scenery we passed through, I thought I could discover in his countenance something of the sensations I had myself experienced when at nearly about his age I traversed it for the first time.

On the evening of the third day we began to approach the scene of my old colonial sojourn, and hastened our pace to reach it ere night should put new difficulties in our way. We were yet, however, some miles distant when the sun set, and but for the aid of certain land-marks that I still bore in re-

collection, should have found it no easy task to master the short distance that remained.

There was now no moon up to illuminate its beauties, as on my first well-remembered advent to the spot, but the myriad planets already marshalled in the heavens, afforded a dubious light that partially helped our steps; and at length, ere we were well aware of its propinquity, disclosed at our feet, by their reflection on its surface, the lovely water of Loch Furness.

Our old habitation being on the further side, we had still a space of half a mile to go ere reaching it, and I now for the first time began to entertain misgivings that after all our trouble in getting there, we might possibly find it demolished or untenanted.

As I probed my way in its direction, my mind began involuntarily to revert to the incidents and imagery of the former life I had spent there. The daily sunrise and sunset, our goings forth and comings in, our hours of toil afield, and recreation at home or on the

island, the bracing excitement of our hunting bouts, the wanderings in the woods, and events connected with the romantic episode which had again brought me hither, all came rifely crowding upon my mind, and whilst darkness beset my outward path, gladdening the inner sense with a sunshine they were yet able to reflect.

“And yonder,” I soliloquized, as the peninsula on which it was situate became dimly visible over the water, “yonder is Lindale Cote, and here—aye, here it was I hailed it as my destined Eden, where I could willingly have abode for life. Ah! *cæca mens mortalium*! there it still remains, perchance unchanged, but how is it with its would-be life-long denizen? But fourteen months had passed, and that Arcadian dream was at an end; of those that have succeeded it how few have better justified their promise, the brightest being first to fade, till sickened with the sterile retrospect, he resolves to dream no

more, or, should the fond habit be incurable, find some other subject for its exercise."

"Now, Jonathan, be spry, the brush'll be all burnt out before we start."

Such was the exclamation that, uttered in no very patient tone, and at no great distance from us, put an abrupt estoppel to my reverie.

The voice I fancied that I recognised, and accordingly advanced a few steps towards it, to see if my conjecture should be verified. Again it broke forth from the outward darkness—

"Jonathan! hey, Jonathan! (no answer) loafed to the liquor store, I'll warrant. Jonathan, I say! ain't he a pet now to go spearin' with. Why, Jonathan!"

"Verily," muttered I to myself, "you must be either King David or Bryce Jannock?"

I now discovered a canoe just under the shore, with a glimmering fire at one end, and by its light, the outline of a sturdy figure, wielding a fishing spear and giving utterance

to his impatience in appeals, such as the foregoing. I had no doubt it was my trusty old associate aforesaid, as this used to be one of his favorite occupations, so whispering Robin to remain where he was, and putting on my over-coat, which in the heat of walking I had doffed, I went up without further ado to where the exclaimant stood, and quietly took my seat at the vacant end of the little craft.

"Softly, softly, Jonathan! softly, old coon!" cried Jannock, as the frail barque dipped beneath my weight, "or you'll be punchin' a hole in her bottom and making her as groggy as yourself. Darn it, man, don't ye see ye're a settin on my line?"

It was evident Bryce was in no very blessed humour this particular evening, but desirous for the moment of avoiding recognition, I released his line without reply, and seized the paddle to perform what was expected as my own share of the duty.

"We'll make for the old ground I reckon, under the rock; there's been a power o' fish

there o' late, and this is a first rate night for skewerin' em."

I accordingly paddled away towards where he had signified, and knowing the ground full well, soon brought up at the scene of our intended operations. Bryce freshened the fire with a handful of brush, and poising his fishing spear, bent intently over the side to strike his prey. "Here they are tag-rag and bobtail—massy, what a shoal! Now be smart, Jonathan, my tulip, and we'll just get the pick o' the lot—softly, softly, though—edge away a bit to the left—lud, here's a screamer! so, another stroke!" Away shot the fishing spear, and away shot the fish, uninjured. "Why, Jonathan, what on 'arth was you a drivin' at; blest if you ha'n't cleared the whull drove; back man and let's get the spe'r up—was you agoin' to run the island down, Jonathan? There, that'll do, now softly, so ludamighty what a stunner; now mind your stroke, old coon, and we'll broach him cleverly—left, left!"

I accordingly gave a stroke on the left side, which produced a result apparently the reverse of that desired.

"My stars!" exclaimed Bryce, turning round and appealing to creation in general, "if he hasn't sent us clean ajee again—dod rot it, man, didn't ye hear me cry left? Why, i' the name of Beelzebub—soft tho'—here comes another, a twenty-pounder too, if an ounce—lud's sake now, Jonathan, keep your eyes skinned, do, and mind the word—right! right!"

And away flew the spear once more, as I gave another desperate stroke under the same malign influence as before. The fish again was missed, and the spearman nearly capsized in attempting to recover his weapon.

"Death and tarnation! well if this don't—now Jonathan what devil was't made ye do that? thunner and lightnin man! didn't ye hear me sing out 'right' and hear ye go like an idjet asy'are a shovin' the boat to Canady; the spe'r's gone too! now Jonathan I see how it is—

you've been at your old tricks again, for as early as 'tis—I wish these liquor shops were i' h—ll fire, and their owners brandered atop of 'em; there's not been a sober chap i'the settlement syn' Phil Rys'le was here;—settlement indeed! ahs me! if he had only been here, to ha' seen our goin's on—back man, and let's get the tool up anyhow—gor' darn it, back! ha, wasn't that a rock we touched on? aye, here's water in the boat—now if ever I go afloat agin with such a born goney, such a consarned, confounded, dod-rotted dunderhead—well, it's all up for this bout, you may paddle hum now frind, and welcome," finished Bryce, winding the line with a savage resignation round the spear he had at length regained, "if we've done nothing else, we've spiled as good a boat as ever swum, and skeered the fish from the spot for a month to come."

Whilst I paddled away towards the well-known dwelling as well as my secret laughter would allow, a repeated hail was

heard from that part of the shore where we had embarked.

"Eh! Bryce, Bryce, says 'a," quo' the splenetic spearsman imitating the summons, "who the divel can you be, frind? if you hadn't bin here a spi'lin my sport all this whiie, I would ha' sworn that was you a hollerin' Jonathan; well, shout away frind, whoever you be, here's Bryce at your sarvice."

Again and again came the clamorous summons, and still Jannock listened to it in obdurate but evidently regardful silence; at length he abruptly broke out:—

"Massy, Jonathan, if that ain't you, it must be your double—can't you open your mouth man an speak, 'stead of sittin' there like a floatin' bogle. I think we're all bewitched to night (no answer); Jonathan, d'ye hear me, is that you or not I say, Jonathan?"

There was something so ludicrous in the question, as well as nascent tone of alarm in which it was uttered, that I could suppress

my mirth no longer, nor get out any other words by way of reply than a broken "aye, aye, Bryce."

Bryce now began to smell a rat.

"Aye, aye! hullo, what bedfellow have I got now?"

He then remained perfectly silent till we touched the shore under the old Cote, when suddenly kindling a handful of brush he had prepared for the purpose, he held it close up to my face. His own underwent a rapid transition from ill-humour to wonderment, and from wonderment to gratification, as throwing Truegroove on his left arm, and wringing my hand like a very vice, he exclaimed:—

"Eh what! why it ain't—massy, it is Phil Ry'sle as sure as shootin'."

"Phil Ruysdale, sure enough," returned I demurely, "but methinks you've given him but a scurvy sort of welcome."

"Wull, that's a fact," quo Bryce, laughing as he recalled his late objurgations, "there

ain't no denyin' it; but who would ha' dreamed it was you 'playin' possum' by starlight, and bedevillin' the boat arter that fashion; how heavy too you stepped into it, squire; you'll have more beef on your bones than you had onst, I'm thinkin'. Wull, I knowed you'd be harkin' back to the old spot some o' these days, tho' I've well nigh gone under in waitin' for it. Hark (hearing Robin call) ain't that Master Butternut? swouns! who would ha' thought o' this! I'll away and fetch him over; is he as full o' book notions as he used to be?" asked Bryce with his dry laugh, "and as fond o' peltry? Ahs me!" sighed he, as he threw the relics of his fire into the lake and paddled off. "He'll find no more skinnin' in these parts, I reckon."

CHAPTER VI.

HAVING groped my way through the neglected grounds to our old habitation, I sat down awhile at the outside to await the coming up of my companions.

Ere long Jannock returned, accompanied by Robin only, the vociferous Jonathan having been denied passage on the ground of inebriety, and I presently heard the former piloting his new guest towards his abode. "Hie ye in, lad; hie ye in while I tie up the boat; it's only a hunter's shanty, but it has seen many a merry splore in its time; we'll soon raise a low on the hearth, and find a snack o' vittle

for wer inwards. That critter Jonathan's mislaid the pad—heigh-ho ! that ever I should ha' lived to see padlocks wanted in the wilderness !”

Thus guiding, welcoming, and grumbling, the hunter rejoined us in the old familiar chamber where we had of yore listened to so many of his “yarns,” and which lit up by the fire I had resuscitated seemed still haunted by the blythe memories and thronging associations of by-gone times.

As he busied himself with the preparations for our meal, I observed him glancing frequently at our friend Robin, who was sitting demurely in the corner, eyeing with divided interest the weather-beaten figure of his host and the culinary operations he was engaged in. “Wull, squire,” said Jannock, as we sat down to some venison steaks he at length placed on the table, “you’ve been an almighty long time in turning up, that’s a fact; I began to think you was gone under for good, and

that the time had come for the old man to up trap and absquatalate."

"Absquatalate, Bryce! what, from the once well-beloved shores of Loch Furness?"

"Aye," returned he, austere, "and shake off the dust of my moccasins agin the sacrilegious raff as is come to o'errun it in these latter days. Englishers, Dutchers, Irishers, drunkards, loafers, lumberers, thieves; grog-shops here—watermills there—roguery everywhere—noise, no end on. Heaven and 'arth knows what I've had to stand among 'em, waiting for you this twelve year gone and more; axes dinning in my ears all day long; game skeered off wi' whirly wheels; fish p'isoned wi' saw-dust, and every now and then some skunk of a lawyer coming up and axing me what I would take for my location. 'My sarvice to you, frind,' says I; 'air you a wantin' on it now, or do you mind waitin' till you get it?' there ain't no carrying on with it no longer, so I'm tip-top chipper

you've come back, squire—better late than never—to look arter your gear, and keep it from falling into the hands of the Philistines.”

This was by no means an inviting picture of my ci-devant Eden, but I made large allowance for the colouring given to it by the old woodsman's prejudices and pursuits.

“It has fairly made an old man of me,” he continued, “so I e'en think of turning my back on the blackguards and sloping nor'rards, where I can sight Truegroove on a deer now and then, and 'arn and eat my vittles in peace.”

“A very natural resolve under the circumstances, but I've other work in hand for you, old boy, and other game afoot; have you been at the Far Pines of late?”

“Far Pines! aye, there's a new settler there now, and he calls the spot Petersville; Peter's folly, say I, for he has made a rare fool's nest on't; the game has become so scarce I had to stretch as far as there to drop this deer we're a eatin'.”

"Well, and do you remember a certain young fawn we were once engaged in hunting up at that same spot?"

"Du' I remember it? du' I not? I've so'thing to tell ye about that bit of venison. I onst thought of coming over to you in the old country about the business, but I didn't know where you was, and I didn't hear nothing tell of you, so I just wrote a bit of a letter instead, which may be never got to hand."

"It certainly never got to mine, which I much regret; how was the letter directed?"

"'Squire Ry'sle, th' old country,' I some think."

Which readily accounts for the circumstance, thought I. "Well, we'll talk over the matter to-morrow (I did not wish to admit Robin too far into our secrets at this early stage); now tell me how it has fared with you since we parted that fine morning under the beech tree."

"Why, arter you and Master Butternut had

gone, (well, I should ha' been glad to ha' seen him here again) I was rayther hard bested at times by gangs o' these onpeaceable Yankees as came down upon the Cote; one time with our old frind Master Lane at their head, seeking to play off some of his old shines; but I soon found the way to content 'em. Whenever the varmint showed their thievish mugs, I pulled off in the canoe to the island and peppered away with old True-groove at every mother's son that showed face, foot, or posteerum. Arter barkin' Hag-gai and two or three more o' the riptyles, they got tired o' the entertainment at last, and sheered off, arter settin' fire to the old logs, which I got back in time to put out.

"So then the peace came, and a pleasant and quiet time I had on't for years, gettin' game to my heart's content and peltry too, till these skunks o' settlers showed their dirty faces and druv the game away, and the peltry and contentment along with it. Syne then," concluded the old woodsman, with a sigh,

"my life has been little else, as I may ca' it, than vanity and vexation of spirit."

Having finished his brief recital, he turned to Robin (who during his discourse had been closely examining Truegroove), and after complacently regarding him and his employment for some minutes, observed to me with an air of satisfaction :

"Clever-looking younker, that—different brand from Master Butternut, I'm thinkin' ; but—"

Here he took a hemlock sprout from the floor, and manipulated it significantly with his fingers.

"Green, you would say, Bryce—something green and inexperienced—it may be so ; but practice will amend that ; the stoutest tree in the forest was a sapling once."

"And that's true, too."

"If you consent to join our enterprize, we shall all of us, I suspect, earn some additional wrinkles in our horns before we've done ; in the meantime, as we've had rather a hard

day's work of it, and look for a good many more to come, you will excuse us if we now ask the way to our sleeping berths."

Our trusty host soon prepared us a couple of shakedown, and happy in having so far made good our way, and gratified, on my own part, despite the Jeremiads I had heard, to find my property in a condition that promised well for my interests, we laid ourselves down in contentment, and enjoyed a sound and well-earned rest.

The next day, leaving Robin to amuse himself for a few hours as he best liked, Jan-nock and I paddled out into the lake, when I informed him of the object of my visit, and excited his great astonishment at the disclosures I had to make to him in connection with it.

He willingly tendered me his services, and we then laid our heads together to devise the best means of commencing our important work.

The communication he had had to make to

me the night before, was simply that during a moment of boon companionship, he had been informed by the landlord of the woodland tavern (Mike Leary), who had overheard the discussions of the plotters, that the missing child we were in search of had, instead of perishing in the fire, been kidnapped and carried away to some remote part of the West, which he professed to be further ignorant of, and that he believed this was done with the privity, if not at the instigation of the English stranger who had heretofore been his lodger.

This, though satisfactory in confirming the conclusions we had already come to, gave us but indifferent light for making our first throw off. I pressed Jannock to turn the matter carefully over in his mind, whilst I went on a tour of inspection through my property, and give me the results of his deliberation in the evening.

At that time he entered again upon the subject, told me he had revolved the matter

to the best of his ability, but was really unable to recommend one plan more than another, unless I thought the following suggestion worthy of consideration.

Leary and, as he believed, Lane, being both dead, the Indians (Toby and Ruth) disappeared, he knew not whither; and his old comrade, Steve Wiley, being the only one of those concerned in the abduction who was known to him, and on whom, therefore, could be founded any hope of assistance, we might endeavour to trace him out, and by gratifying his well-known passion for money, obtain the information so essential to us. This he thought was possible from its being within his knowledge that Wiley had a mother living in Kentucky, whom he was in the habit of visiting on his return from his trapping expeditions, and who, if it should be thought worthwhile to make so long a journey to consult her, might give us information as to his whereabouts.

We might take this, suggested Jannock, for

our first move, as it offered a chance at least of making a right start, and was therefore better than remaining idle, or being left to grope our way in the dark.

In this view I concurred, and having adopted it as the first portion of our plan of campaign, we allowed no needless delay to interfere with its execution.

One day more I devoted to giving the necessary instructions to a lawyer for the disposal of my property in the neighbourhood, and the following one found Jannock, Robin and myself on the road, diligently pursuing our way southwards.

Considering the vast distance to be traversed we thought we had made good progress, when towards the end of the third week of our journey, we were wearily completing its last stage.

We had entered Kentucky in the morning, and during the course of the day had abundant occasion to admire the varied and beautiful features of that favoured state—the

undying charms of its natural scenery, the wide yellow tracts of Indian corn, waving in full harvest promise over the "bloody ground," and the fine specimens of domestic animals which every now and then met our view, shewing the superior "mettle of their pasture."

By observations such as these, and conversation they gave rise to, we beguiled the tedium of travel as best we might, and late in the afternoon, having regaled ourselves with some excellent cyder at a rustic tavern on the road, found ourselves descending the long hill, down which winds the highway leading to the small but picturesque village of Coonsville.

The sun had just set over the opposite heights, and we were about putting our horses to a trot, that we might save what remained of the short twilight, when a sharp-featured, shrewish looking woman ran out of a loghouse at the road side, and going up to

Jannock, who was nearest her, requested him, with an earnest air, to call as we passed through the village, on one Nathaniel Crane, a respectable inhabitant of the place.

"Poor Steve—that's my son," said she, "he's taken mighty bad this arternoon, and nothing 'll content him, but gettin' some decent body to come and talk with him. Now Nathaniel, ye see, had him in hand when he was a youngster, and him and Steve seemed al'ays to cotton 'til each other, and now he thinks he's like to die he wants to see the old friend as taught him all the good he ever got, and would ha' put him into a better way than may be he has chanced to follow, poor feller."

We of course agreed to her request, when, looking steadily at me, she observed—

"I think, sir, you're an Englisher—if I be right, will ye step into the shanty awhile, and speak with my poor agoin' son; he has just now been saying to me, he would give all he had

in the world for three minutes' speech with some honest Englisher. But," she added, "ye must'nt set too much store, mind, by what Steve tells ye, for he has never been his right man syn' he caught this ugly Western fever, and to-night he's more flightsome far than ever."

The old woman's manner, which showed her feelings were concerned, no less than the import of her speech, raised my curiosity, and induced me to comply with her desire, so after despatching Robin on her errand I alighted from my jaded horse, and followed her into her humble dwelling.

Preceding me on tiptoe, she softly opened the door of a rude, rough-planked chamber, and there, on a low pallet, with his face turned towards a little window that let in the fading glow of the sunset, lay the individual who had expressed the singular wish to see some honest Englishman.

His appearance, together with that of his

bed-gear, which, though clean, was greatly tossed and rumpled, indicated the distraction and restlessness of fever.

Surely I have seen that face before, thought I, and half-audibly muttered.

"Aye," echoed a low, deep voice at my elbow, "there lies Steve Wiley, as sure as here stands Bryce Jannock; pray God, we're not too late."

"Bryce Jannock! Is that Bryce Jannock?"

"Aye, here he is, Steve. D'ye remember the scrimmage we had with the Raphoes, old hoss, and Mike Leary's, and Haggai Lane, and the fire in the woods that time the English lord was burnt?"

The sick man gasped as this was spoken, turned his face to his pillow, and after a short silence, during which he seemed to be gathering strength to speak, muttered in a low and broken voice, "Oh, Bryce, I'm making tracks for the next world; that was a bad

business ; whenever I think on't it downs me like walking over a burnt prairie. You're sartain he died, then ?"

" Sartain ; I helped to bury him with my own hands."

" Well, I al'ays thought it was so ; but o' late, in my lonesome hours, he has time and agin appeared afore me ; only a while syne I see him there, where that gentleman's a standin, and he asked me for his child. Many's the red Injyns I've shot down in my trapping bouts, and thought no more on it than dropping so many chitmunks ; but this burning and kidnapping Christi'n men and gals, heaven and 'arth seems to cry out in judgment agin it."

" Kidnapped, did ye say, Steve ? what, was the young gal then kidnapped ?"

" Aye, kidnapped she was ; the father was burned, and the child was kidnapped. It cries agin me day and night, and 'll let me have no rest till it comes out. She was

carried away at a stranger's bidding, for gold. I never rightly knew the secrets o' the matter, but I suspicion he craved her wealth. He gave us gold by handful—I'll tell the truth—a dollar each we got for every mile we took her, and now it's all lying here (placing his hand on his heart, and sighing deeply) heavier—heavier than the 'Three Tetons.'"

His mother now went up to his bed-side, and said in his ear:

"Steve, there's an English gentleman here; you wanted to see one, you know, just now."

The sick man turned his eyes upwards, as though in mute thanksgiving at the circumstance, muttering to himself the while, "the matter may be mended yet then;" and addressing me in a voice scarcely audible, he said:

"Draw nigh, sir, for my wind is worsening fast. When you go back to the old country, seek out the friends of the settler as—as—Bryce there knows who I mean."

"Aye, aye; go on, Steve; we know."

"Tell them, tho' the father be dead, the child is living —"

"Where?" I exclaimed, in the intensity of my interest.

"Softly, softly, squire," interposed Jan-nock; "let him take his own way, or we shall have him off the track altogether."

"Near where that devil Lane and his setter-on bestowed her, far away west, among the Blackfeet."

"Which breed o' Blackfeet, Steve? was it the praira or mountain niggers?"

"Wind river Injyns. I see her there myself last fall. Mightily grown she was, and as dark as a red-skin, but I knowed her; tell them, if they would heal their bleeding hearts, and give rest to the soul of a dying sinner, to seek her out, and bring her to her country and kin again."

Several anxious questions were then put to him, which he found himself unable to answer.

After a long interval, he faintly murmured, "Air, air; give me air, mother; I'm going."

The door of his chamber was accordingly thrown open, and at the same instant in walked the individual who had been summoned to converse with him, a tall, benevolent-looking man, with a somewhat demure cast of countenance, and behind him my messenger, Robin.

"How is he, Sarah?" asked the former, in a subdued tone; "any hope?"

"I'm afeard not; he says he's a-goin', and he looks like it; see how he's a pickin' the spread."

He then went up to his friend's bed-side, and said gently in his ear:

"Steve, I'm come; speak to me—speak to Nathaniel."

A faint "O, Nathaniel!" escaped with the parting breath of the dying trapper, and his features then gradually sunk into the tokenless vacuity of death.



Meditating deeply on this scene, as solemn and momentous as it was unexpected, I proceeded, after a decent interval with my two associates, to our hotel.

CHAPTER VII.

Our path seemed now much clearer, and our chief anxiety was to pursue it with as little delay as possible.

The revelations of the defunct trapper threw a fearful light upon the broken speeches I had formerly over-heard at the tavern, particularly that one which, puzzling me then, I had so often mused on since: "You shall have a dollar a-piece for every mile you take her."

They had carried her, it appeared, to the Rocky Mountains—a distance of two thousand miles, and assuming the compact to be fulfilled,

would have each therefore received a wage of as many dollars.

Considering the work it was received for, no wonder his wicked earnings lay so heavy on the conscience of the unhappy man whose remorseful end we had just witnessed.

Retribution had thus overtaken the two subordinate agents in the plot (for Lane had died in the course of a long imprisonment incurred by subsequent offences) and it now only remained to repair the evil they had occasioned, and bring their wicked principal to justice.

Leaving Coonsville the next morning, we proceeded as expeditiously as possible to St. Louis, where our party was to be organised, and equipments and stores provided for our long land journey.

Being the chief emporium of western traffic we found, on arriving there, no difficulty in procuring the various matters necessary for our purpose, and having abundant funds at my disposal, I determined to spare neither ex-

pense nor pains in giving the party an effective outfit.

Our first purchase was of strong leathern clothing (buck-skin hunting shirts, leggings, and moccasins) which might stand the wear and tear of a rough out-of-doors life for some twelve or eighteen months, it being for this purpose far more suitable than any textile fabric.

We then at a gunsmith's, whose wares bore a good reputation, procured two rifles for myself and Robin (Bryce still rejoiced in his inseparable Truegroove), of the long and heavy kind usual in the States, carrying balls of 60 to the pound, as also half-a-dozen long pistols (the barrels ten inches in length) capable of projecting a bullet with good effect at 50 yards.

The honest armourer informed us there had been considerable demand for his weapons of late in consequence of the disturbed state of the Indian country, though he feared, as to many of them, they were no better than

"pearls thrown afore swine;" hoped, however, we should handle our "shootin' ir'ns" to better purpose, and invited us to report on their merits in case we should ever come that way again. He then directed us to a respectable cutler's, where we might furnish ourselves with trustworthy hunting knives. "A good deal of trash," he remarked, "was vended under this name, but if you want a re'l slap-up whittle that 'll sliver a bough, slice a buck, or scalp a redskin, there," said he, pointing to the shop, "you'll suit yourselves I guess, to a nicety."

With respect to this article there is more judgment required in the choice than seems to be generally exercised.

Being wanted alike for purposes of wood craft, an arm of offence and defence, and the more humble uses of a whittle, it should be at once heavy enough to serve as bill or short sword—sharp enough to quarter a deer without mangling, and light enough to

be easily handled on occasion at the trencher on which that deer may be laid in the form of venison.

Those we chose by the advice of an old trapper, who happened to be in the shop at the time, were not more than a foot long in the blade, but nearly two inches in width, having but one edge till about two inches from the tip, where the back was slightly scalloped out, and the remainder to the point made equally sharp on both sides. Each might be a little more than a pound in weight; its temper of the best "bill" metal, not liable to snip, and requiring the occasional use of the whetstone.

Not being able to hear of any caravan immediately about to proceed in the direction we proposed for ourselves, and three making but a small force to dare the dangers of the Western Deserts, it was deemed advisable to augment it by enlisting a couple of stout well-experienced hunters, which, as celerity was to

be consulted as well as safety, we thought would make up with ourselves a sufficient number for ensuring both.

As fate however willed it, among the motley crowds then congregated at St. Louis, not even this small number of the precise sort of men we wanted—individuals to be depended on, who would not warp in the wear, were procurable—at least none to satisfy the fastidious taste of Jannock, who was charged with their selection, and entertained perhaps a just dread of clogging the movements of the party with what he called “lumber.”

Casually mentioning our difficulty to our acquaintance the gunsmith, he told me that if I would not mind waiting a few days, he thought he could supply me with the sort of men I wanted—two trapping friends of his own, at present serving in a fur brigade, which was expected shortly to arrive.

To this proposal I briefly objected the delay it would occasion, and he then suggested that as our intended route seemed to tally with

that taken by the returning traders, I might endeavour to meet and make my arrangements with them on the road.

This being apparently quite a feasible course, I decided on adopting it.

To carry provisions and other needful stores, I sought out and purchased a light covered waggon, small in the body, but with strong wheels and axles, in which I caused to be carefully stowed a precious cargo of flour, biscuits, coffee, tea, sugar, tobacco (the latter the best medium of exchange in the Indian country), and ammunition, together with a small quantity of cured meat (for supplies of this in a fresh state we relied upon our rifles) to the tune of fifteen hundred-weight, which was thought not above what our team of six mules would be quite able to deal with.

If the reader should consider this a trifling load for a team of six, he will be pleased to remember they had to be their own road-makers as they drew it.

In regard to the mounting of the party, I

had for my own riding an exceedingly good little mare, which I had taken a fancy to and bought in my way through Kentucky—a darkish chestnut, showing a good deal of blood; and having procured a couple of stout serviceable animals for Jannock and Robin, our little party found themselves fully appointed and equipped in every respect for their enterprize.

To drive the waggon, act as cook, and help us generally at the outset, I hired a Canadian half-breed, of the name of Antoine, who professed to have had much experience in his line, and whom we made conditions to dispense with at the end of a month, in case of either party so willing it.

It was on the fifth of August that the echoes of our teamster's whip resounding in the "liberal air," gave audible token of our having at length got fairly under way, all of us in the highest spirits, and little disposed to dwell on the prospective crosses and hard-

ships that inevitably await the far-western traveller.

Our mules, being imperfectly broken, gave us for the first few days a good deal of trouble, as new teams usually do, and long ere the day was spent two of the most refractory having broken their harness in two places, it was found necessary to halt in the midst of a wild plain in order to repair it.

Whilst thus employed Jannock called my attention to the appearance of the sky, which, hitherto bright and cloudless, began now to show a black haze along the horizon, swiftly ascending towards the zenith. There was a boding look about it that told the storm fiend was approaching, and about to carry it with a high hand.

"We must make snug," cried Bryce, "and that soon; yon clouds are travelling like a full-blown praira fire."

"How awfully black they look!"

"Aye, black as gunpowder, and I guess they'll be giving it us arter the same fashion ;

we must make for yon hollow, and hobble the beasts, slick, or we shall have 'em stampeded by the lightnin', and be left to drag our 'notions' ourselves."

Antoine having in some sort restored the gear, the waggon was driven to the place signified—a natural depression in the ground which might afford us some small shelter from the wind, and then all used their best efforts in securing the valuable animals on which we began more and more to feel our dependence.

On concluding this task we anxiously sought for any sign that might discover to us the quarter in which the storm would break.

Though an almost midnight darkness overspread the heavens, no sound, not even a breath of wind was perceptible, and like ourselves, the unreasoning animals about us conscious of an impending crash, yet awed by the ominous hush, stood helplessly awaiting the catastrophe.

We were still lingering by the side of the waggon for the purpose of leading our three horses at a moment's notice under its lee-side as soon as we could discover which side that would be, when a thunder-clap that seemed to rend the very heavens broke over our heads, accompanied by a furious blast, which, coming as it seemed from every point of the compass at once, entirely defeated our kind purpose towards our dumb companions.

Too happy were we to find refuge ourselves under the tilt of the vehicle from the deluges of rain that in compact, sluicy sheets now descended, speedily inundating the plain around, and threatening even to swamp us bodily in the hollow where we had fled for refuge.

The stunning thunder, incessant lightning, and overwhelming watershed, exceeded all I had heretofore conceived of the power and sublimity of a land storm. Assailed as we were by it in the midst of a dreary waste, at the very outset of our expedition, it excited a

certain feeling of discouragement; we were even disposed to regard it as an evil omen—to fancy the spirit of our arch-adversary rode the blast, and was marshalling the elements themselves to war against the champions of right.

Cowering beneath our frail awning, in fear every moment of getting a ride into the air on the top of our powder canisters, we sat smoking our pipes and blinking at the lightning for nearly a couple of hours, when the storm began to show symptoms of abating. The wind ceased by degrees, the gloomy pall that had overhung the sky thinned away, and the bright blue firmament at last, thronged with its golden monitors, came forth, stablishing a silent cheer within our breasts, and telling in celestial language that the tyranny of nature was overpast.

Though yet early in the evening it was too late to re-yoke our teams, so gathering and securing our scared quadrupeds round the waggon, we returned to its shelter, made out

a supper from our stores, and at length laid ourselves down to rest.

Early the next morning we proceeded on our way, our spirits toned anew by the delightful elasticity of the air and fresh beauty of the country, renovated by the late rains.

Examining it as we paced along, we were pleased to see on every side its abounding promise of fertility, and the thriving farms we now and then passed by, gave token this was far from being lost on the practical and energetic race that peopled it.

Missouri being a frontier state, its population possesses very much of that half-horse, half-alligator character, that constitutes the backwoodsman type. During this and the following days the different varieties we met of it in the shape of bee-hunters, stark-trappers, intending settlers, and rough independent farmers jogging along to fair or market, nearly all armed with the universal rifle, gave us ample opportunity of judging of the sons of the soil, and gratifying a curiosity I had

long felt to behold the Anglo-Saxon, severed from the parent stock, and in a new hemisphere, under the influence of these primitive conditions of life.

Laying our course towards the Kansas river we got along at the rate of about twenty miles a day, occasionally meeting with rivers which, though for the most part fordable, had often precipitous banks, which rendered a good deal of labour necessary to effect a practicable passage for the waggon.

Thus, seasoning ourselves by degrees for the more arduous stages of our journey, and having as yet encountered no peril and but little hardship, we at length reached the confines of the State and entered on the great Western wilderness.

So far nothing had been seen or heard of the fur-trading party from whom we expected to obtain our additional hands, and it was not without much uneasiness I found we were advancing into the prairies with so weak and (with one exception) inexperienced a force.

Waiting, however, would in no wise mend the matter, and as we had taken care to adhere to the route prescribed us, there yet remained a possibility of our falling in with them, so that "forward" was still the word, and forward we boldly fared.

Some few days after crossing the frontier I was riding, towards evening, with Jannock, a little ahead of the rest, my comrade looking about for a suitable spot to encamp in, and myself admiring the exquisite colouring of the western sky, as, stretched behind clumps of fir trees, it cast its tinted splendours over the wild steppe around, when on passing a grove of pines that had for some time served us as a land-mark, we suddenly beheld a bright fire blazing at a little distance on our front.

Halting awhile to allow the waggon to come up I carefully reconnoitred the object through my spy-glass.

The flame was flickering on the stems of a knot of fir trees about half a mile a-head, and we also joyfully perceived it reflected on

a stream of water for which we had been anxiously looking out since morning. Amidst the timber two waggons were seen drawn up, and human figures, both male and female, moving to and fro, as though engaged in preparations for their night's camp.

There being nothing to alarm us in these appearances, the party being evidently whites, we again pushed ahead of the waggon and rode directly towards them.

As we drew near we perceived a venerable looking old man of unmistakeably Anglo-Saxon physiognomy, seated on the shafts of his waggon, and engaged with a two-handed knife in whittling what seemed to be some appurtenance of the vehicle.

A little in his rear three young women were superintending some utensils at the fire, which from the savoury steam that issued from them seemed charged with material for their supper, and on the borders of the rivulet four or five well-grown youths were plying their important tasks of cutting wood for the

camp-fire and hobbling the wearied teams which, freed from the appliances of their labour, were solacing themselves during the operation by cropping the sweet herbage at the side of the water course.

The old man courteously returned my greeting, and saying to one of the youths who had sauntered up, "Here, Jonathan, you whip us all at whittling; just get this spoke finished off, and let us have the tire on before it gets dark," invited us to alight and partake of what cheer he had to offer.

Stimulated by the keen prairie air we did not wait a second bidding, but after unharnessing and sidelining our cattle ("sidelining" is tying the fore and hind legs on the same side within eighteen or twenty inches of each other) joined the little circle at the fire to which the presence of females conferred so unwonted an attraction.

Of these the eldest alone had arrived at womanhood, and seldom had my eye rested on a fairer specimen of the English (for such

we found she was) country maid. Her person was of middle size, tolerably well formed, though it might be somewhat stouter than would have been deemed by "your pinning, screwed-up, wasp-waisted daughters of fashion," exactly conformable with their beau ideal.

A skin of snowy whiteness might be detected in spite of her high modest dress, by one regardful of such matters, whilst a pair of clear bright hazel eyes gave marvellous light and animation to a countenance whose native bloom remained unpaled, and whose purely chiselled features rendered it an eloquent index of the frank and amiable spirit that informed it. A profusion of nut-brown hair, of precisely the same hue and racily harmonising with her eyes, fell unstifled by cap, untortured by steel or curl paper, in rich clusters upon her shoulders, completing with the peculiar glory of her sex (if her sex would but only know it) the tale of her simple but extraordinary attractions.

Her two sisters, who seemed yet in their teens, so little resembled her that I at once set them down, as indeed proved to be the case, for the offspring of a second marriage.

The supper being reported ready and the five youths called in from their work, the fair Hannah (such was our Hebe's name among mortals) assumed the direction of the meal, which, after an emphatic grace from her grey-haired sire, was despatched by us all with the appetite and enjoyment to have been expected.

According to the common fashion of the west, and indeed as was not unnatural under the circumstances, the conversation took pretty much of the question and answer form, and I may confess, if we found our new acquaintance somewhat interrogatively disposed, the picture presented by this English family (their nationality was soon apparent) wandering in the guise they were through the wilderness, awoke no little curiosity on my own part.

After finishing our meal the young men returned to their left-off labours, and my host having lighted his pipe, proceeded to communicate to me the following details of his history :—

His name was Richard Wainwright, and he had begun life as a farmer, in his native county, Lincolnshire. Marrying in middle life the daughter of a neighbouring gentleman, he became in due course enriched with the fair girl I have described, and four sons, all of whom he still retained around him.

In his earlier years, he did not scruple to inform me, he had lived more freely than he might have done, and subsequently became deeply tinctured with the important truths of religion which had held great sway over his mind up to the present time.

The particular creed he had adopted was that of the Independents, and a large party of his co-religionists having quitted their neighbourhood for the hopeful shores of the new world, at a time when his farm failed to afford

a sufficient maintenance to his family, he had come to the determination of taking the same step himself.

The State selected as most favorable to his views was Illinois, where his wife early fell a victim to endemic disease. At a later period he had married an American woman, who had made him the father of the two other girls I have mentioned, and a lad now about sixteen, named Jonathan.

His second wife also having died, and his location being found permanently unhealthy, he had made up his mind to change his home a second time, and was yet hesitating in his choice of a future, when a letter was received from his American brother-in-law, who had acquired a large tract of land in the Indian country, near a military post recently established by government, inviting him to come with his family and share in the labour and profits of its management. After due deliberation, he had come to the conclusion of doing so, and we now found him on his road,

having completed the greater part of his long and hazardous journey.

I say, hazardous ; for tho' unaware of it apparently himself, we had received accounts from the trappers and traders met with on the road, of much discontent prevailing and numerous outrages having been lately committed against the whites by the Osage Indians, whose country we were about to enter, and who were at this very time with their allies, the Sioux, engaged in hostilities against the Kansas tribe, in whose territory we then actually were.

Being a man of fearless temperament, he made light of the precautionary arguments I urged, pointed to his five stalwart sons, showed in what safety he had hitherto made his journey, and expressed his confidence with the help of God of enjoying the same good fortune to the end.

Listening to the old man recounting his experiences and expatiating on his prospects, whilst the fire cast its lurid glow upon his

upright but careworn countenance and those of his interesting and interested daughters, I could not help feeling a certain admiration of his fortitude, mingled, however, with a good deal of misgiving, which events now near at hand were too soon and too sadly to justify.

As the night darkened in, the young men (whose bold bearing and vigorous frames might well bear out their father's boast,) came dropping in one by one, and the family circle being at length complete, Hannah handed a well-used volume she had been holding open on her lap, to her sire, who (evidently as a matter of pious usage) proceeded to read a prayer for divine protection ere resigning ourselves to the rest and perils of the night.

This was followed by a short hymn, sung by the three sisters, and we were yet listening to Hannah's sweet voice, as it swelled one of its dying cadences, when a faint whistle was heard in the air above us, and the next instant an Indian arrow struck the earth in our midst.

For a few moments we scarcely knew what to make of the occurrence, and gazed at the mysterious missile in wondering silence; then Richard, the eldest of the young men, took it up from the ground, and examined it with a simple and rather sottish air of curiosity.

"Why, here's a bit of tow on it!" he exclaimed, "and, as I live, fastened by some of Hannah's yellow silk."

The youth handed it to his sister, who in her turn gave it her close attention.

"Well, can ye make it out, sister?" he asked. "It's your silk, is it not?"

His father, who had already laid aside his book and spectacles, now demanded, as he resumed the latter, to see the object that was creating such a general sensation, and it was forthwith placed in his hands. As soon as he had satisfied himself it was no frolic on the part of the young men, he said—

"It certainly looks like your broidering silk, Hannah; can you explain how it comes to us in this fashion?"

The fair girl was silent for a time, as tho' trying to solve the mystery in her own mind; then answered, with the air of one who had at length done so :

" Yes, father, I think I can, now. This is part of some silk I gave to the Sioux, Wah-to-gach-to, the day he left us; it was to fasten the feathers on his arrows with, he said; it must surely have come from him."

" As he left but a day before ourselves, and was bound, I understand, in the same direction, it is far from impossible he may be in our neighbourhood now, and this may be merely an Indian frolic on his part.

" But cast as we are, sir," said the old man, turning to me, " among the heathen, it behoves us to keep upon our guard; perhaps yourself, or your friend, who seems to be experienced in border fashions, may help us to a right insight into the matter."

The party last referred to, Jannock, who was leaning on his rifle outside the circle, as though absorbed by the sacred melody he had

been listening to, now righted abruptly about to where the arrow was going its rounds, and in response to Hannah's touch on the arm, said:—

“Eh! what is it, gal? let's have a squint at the cur'osity.”

The article was accordingly passed to him, together with what Richard had called the “bit of tow,” hitherto retained in his hand, and as he glanced alternately from one to the other, a look of disquietude, not unmingled with anxiety, came over his broad, firm-set features.

His first words were in an under-tone to young Hood:—

“Go and bring in the critters, Robin; in with 'em, slick, every hoof; take Jonathan with you, and, hark'ee, boys, keep your eyes skinned whilst you're about it.”

He then made Hannah relate to him all she knew in connection with the circumstance, which was limited to the explanation already

given to her father, when turning to the latter he said:—

“Fri’nd, when it’s snowing scalps, and raining arrows, we may safely reckon there’s a storm blowing up; it’s time to be doin’! whether this we’pon be from fri’nd or foe, you may trust a man who don’t see Injyn shafts, or meet Injyn deviltry now for the first time, that danger’s nigh at hand. This is a human scalp, and though I don’t like to speak sartinly on sich matters, for Injyn guile ain’t fathomable, yet from the fashion it comes I rayther think it’s sent us as a warning to save our own.”

This intimation, as well it might, broke up the social circle and set us all hastily in motion to provide for our immediate safety. The young men were directed to bring in the rest of the cattle as quickly and quietly as possible, and as soon as he saw them off, and not till then, Bryce enquired of me the exact spot where the arrow fell.

The place was pointed out to him, when, after examining it a moment, he remarked:—

“So, it has had no head to it; the gal’s right, it’s come from some fri’ndly hand, I’m thinkin’; but trust me, it’s come for a warnin’, ne’er a whit the less.”

Whatever was its source, and whatever might be its import, there was obviously but one course to be taken by ourselves, and that was to secure our fortunately united parties against the murderous designs that seemed menaced by the grim portent.

Though the object that had occasioned such dismay must have been launched in quite close proximity to us, not a sound or sight, or token of any kind betrayed the neighbourhood of either friend or foe, and the mystery that attended the incident added a feeling of awe to the alarm it had itself created.

Jannock, as the most experienced of the party, now took the direction of its arrangements.

The three waggons were disposed so as to form three sides of a square, the fourth of which was closed by a fence of felled timber, and in the enclosure thus made the united force took up its position, the women in the centre, almost wholly secured from missiles, and all of us in a measure protected from the danger chiefly to be apprehended, of any sudden rush from an unseen enemy in the dark.

The horses and mules which had been brought in by the youths without molestation were tethered (side-lined as they were) to the outside of the waggons, and in each vehicle, the tilts being partly drawn up, was stationed one of the young men as sentinel, who, favoured by the elevation of his post, and the bright moonlight that prevailed, could command a view for a good gunshot on every side of the encampment.

In this fashion we passed the watches of a wakeful and anxious night, happily without

further disturbance than arose from the occasional challenges of the blood-hound, as it snuffed some tainted flaw, or bayed the bright planet that was befriending us with its light.

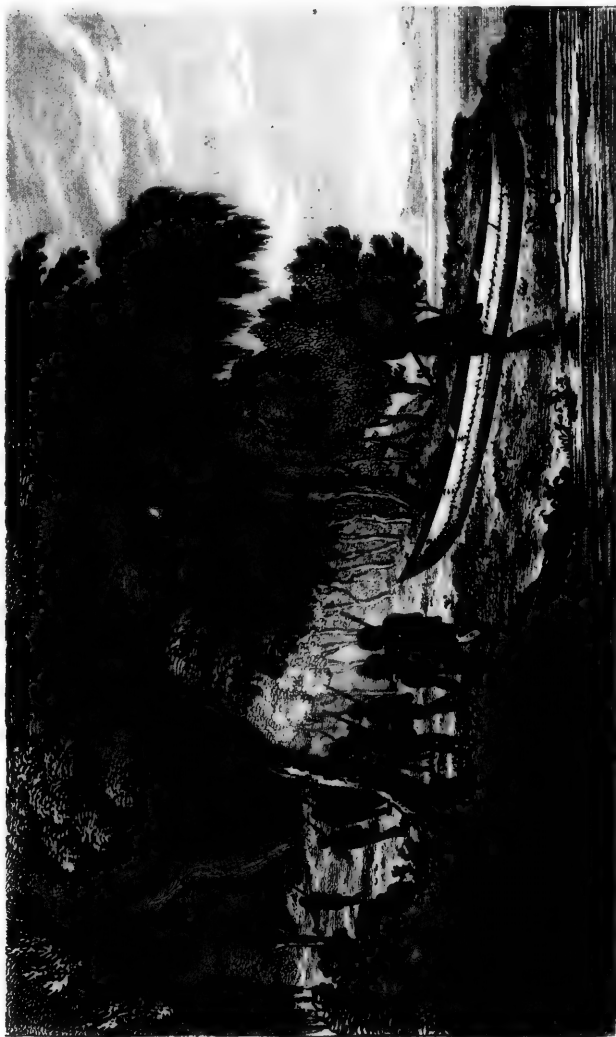
CHAPTER VIII.

Our first business the next morning was to examine the ground about our camp for traces of our nocturnal visitors, which was done without anything being discovered to indicate their numbers or intentions. We therefore came to the conclusion that our recent alarm was caused by a single individual, who, as surmised by our new acquaintance, might be considered amicably disposed to us, and had chosen this mode of intimating his presence, or playing off an Indian joke.

From this view of the case, however, there was one dissentient, and a pretty stubborn

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one, in Bryce Jannock, who reiterated his opinion that the arrow with its fearful appendage had been sent us as a solemn warning, and that neither the one nor the other was likely to have been thrown away for the mere purpose of causing a surprise; he "had been among Injyns, and knew so'thing of their nature, which warn't so fond o' joking as we thought for." He represented that we were now near the country of the Osages, who for injuries real or supposed had sworn hostility to the whites, and that if one of their war-parties had got upon our trail with evil intent, the Sioux Wahtogachto, whose tribe was in alliance with theirs, however well-inclined he might be personally, would yet be unable to control them, or befriend us openly. For anything we knew, there might have been twenty savages round our camp as well as one, who were, perhaps, only deterred from attacking us by our prompt preparations for defence. As for our not discovering their traces, "the wonder would be," said Bryce,

"if you *could* diskiver them; as well might you expect that arro' to leave its trail in the air, as these red-skins to leave theirn on 'arth when they want it hidden, though for all that it's quite as likely as not they may be within hail this very moment. This creek, now, if it had a tongue, might tell us so'thing of their night's doin's; but it's as well not to wake sleepin' snakes; so we'll just see to fixin' our breakfasts, and then slope off softly towards the sundown."

Accordingly after a hasty meal, the two parties resumed their way westwards, all of us anxious to lay as great a space as possible between our last and future camping places.

Whilst pacing along by the side of Hannah's waggon, I took the opportunity in the course of conversation with her of enquiring into the mystery to which she seemed partly privy, connected with our over-night's adventure.

The purport of her explanation was as follows:—

A short time before the family quitted Illinois, a party of Sioux chiefs, who had been on an embassy to Washington, had passed by their abode, and one of their number having fallen ill of a dangerous distemper, had been there left by them with little hope of his recovery. Commiserating his condition, the Wainwrights had admitted him under their roof, where by the charitable and assiduous care of the amiable Hannah, he had at length been restored to health.

Being a better specimen of the redskin genus, he evinced much gratitude to his benefactors for their kind treatment, and more especially to his fair nurse and physician—a gratitude which it was supposed by her half-sisters, who occasionally bantered her upon the subject, would, had it been blessed with adequate encouragement, have readily ripened into a still more ardent feeling.

Under its inspiration, Wahtogachto (such was the Sioux patient's name), on taking leave of his white friends, had given them a

voluntary pledge that notwithstanding the many injuries his tribe had had to complain of from the whites, he would so far as he was himself concerned, henceforth abide their friend, and should any of his benefactors or their countrymen chance to need it, render them what aid and protection he was able.

On parting, half in gratitude and half in gallantry, he had asked his fair preserver for a keepsake, when humouring his wayward fancy, she had presented him with the first article that lay at hand—a reel of yellow silk from her work table.

Since then nothing had been seen or heard of him till the past night, when she received such a startling token of his propinquity in a portion of her own *gage d'amitié*.

I remarked to her that I was not at all surprised at her Sioux acquaintance hanging about the party as he did, since it contained an object so magnetic as herself, but though his intentions might be friendly (as from the care he had taken to discover himself seemed

likely), yet he might possibly want the power of rendering more effective aid, and strongly advised her to keep, together with her two sisters, as much as possible under shelter of the waggon for the remainder of their journey.

The vehicle that bore her was the second in the line, and conducted by Jonathan and his next elder brother, William, between whom I was not long in perceiving a good deal of bickering going on, as the incidents of the journey offered occasion for it, so much so indeed that the old father found it necessary more than once to ride up and allay the strife. On rejoining me after having done so for the third time, he expressed his regret at the dissension of his two sons. "I can never," he said, "get them to agree; they are always keeping it up in this fashion. William is rather too fond of playing the elder brother, and Jonathan (as true a Yankee as his brother calls him) is very impatient of dictation, and I may say indeed of even need-

ful control at times ; I am afraid I shall have to part with one or the other of them if I wish to avoid further trouble in my family."

Poor old man ! he little foresaw how soon the parting was to be made, and how long it was to last.

Keeping a vigilant look-out, in front and rear, our two companies pursued their way together for this and the two succeeding days, encamping as the nature of the ground offered convenience, and experiencing no further molestation from our late nocturnal visitors.

On the day following, finding our progress very much retarded by the slower movements of the heavy horse waggons, and deeming we had now got a good clearance from our late perils, I determined, after consulting Jannock, as our party had a so much greater distance to perform, and so little time at their disposal, to push ahead of our emigrant friends, and make our way forward with all the expedition possible.

The harmony of the morning had been

somewhat broken by another violent quarrel between Jonathan and William, who had even proceeded to blows, and as we were engaged in getting our team into harness, the former of the young men came up and petitioned to be taken on with our party. Ere deciding on the matter it was of course thought only proper to consult his father, who, moved by the considerations he had mentioned to me, gave his consent to the proposal, which was then readily agreed to by myself, for the lad was alert and useful, full of expedient, and, with the single exception of his unripe age, just the sort of recruit we wanted.

It was after our noon meal that we parted from our respectable associates, encamped on a fine stream, one of the feeders of the Kansas river, where, another of their wheels having been found faulty, they expressed their intention of remaining for the night. Bidding them adieu, with many kind wishes expressed on either side, we started, rather later than we had designed, and travelling on till sunset

added some eight miles more to our morning's march.

We now found ourselves, at last, on the "rolling prairie," that wondrous tract of desert which, stretching with slight exception from the confines of the States to the Rocky Mountains divides, and must for ages continue to divide, the seats of civilization on that vast continent from those of Indian barbarism.

With herbage less luxuriant than that of the plains to the east of the Mississippi, it is still further distinguished from them by that widely undulating formation from which it takes its name, resembling the long, rolling swells of the ocean.

By the traveller, who enters on it for the first time, the impression received too is not dissimilar—the same sensation of immensity alternately quelling and exalting the soul, tincturing it by degrees with a congenial wildness, and producing at times an inspiration which awakens the loftiest strain of thought and feeling.

The position we took up this night was well calculated to excite something of this exalted train of sentiment, the illimitable world stretching on every side, and no other object visible but the quivering canopy above us, and the sun on the point of disappearing from it.

The imperative duties of our situation, however, the securing our camp against attack, and refreshing ourselves and animals after our day's march, forbade much indulgence in the musing mood.

Our waggon was drawn up on the top of a little swell, in the centre of a hollow surrounded by several higher ones, so as to be entirely hid from sight at even a short distance off. At the bottom of this hollow a little spring feebly forced its way along the ground, in the channel of which we dug a hole as reservoir, and having drawn a supply of the element for our own use, and sidelined the horses and mules, we sent them down to

fare their best on the grateful fluid and juicy herbage.

A couple of hours had passed away, our supper had been cooked and eaten, our pipes sent their last whiffs into the night air, and each of my companions already betaken himself to his sheepskin, when, it being my turn to take the first watch (for we thought it prudent to adopt this precaution now), I shouldered my rifle, and followed by my faithful Bran, repaired to the nearest eminence on my solitary and important duty.

The night was beautifully fine, with but little wind stirring; a host of light, fleecy clouds were slowly sailing across the heavens, dappling the ground with evanescent glooms, and tempering the moonlight splendour with something of an English softness. A deep silence rested on all around, unbroken by any sound, save the low wail of the night wind, and at long intervals something that might have been taken for the far-off roar of the

buffalo, or neigh of the wild horse, but so faint and indefinable, as to suggest little even to the fancy, but the idea of enormous distance.

For the space of nearly an hour I succeeded in maintaining an exemplary vigilance; then, oppressed by the truly desert stillness and solitude of the scene, I seated myself upon the ground, and indulged in a train of rumination, which, though pleasant and profitable enough in its way, the reader would scarce thank me for rehearsing to him.

At length, overcome by my day's toil, a certain degree of drowsiness crept over me, which, I am ashamed to say, was on the point of taking a still more unequivocal form, when a low growl from the bloodhound restored me to befitting wakefulness. He had raised himself on his forelegs, and seemed to have seen or scented some object that had excited his suspicion. After snuffing the air for some moments, he resumed his recumbent posture, though still by occasional grunts giving token



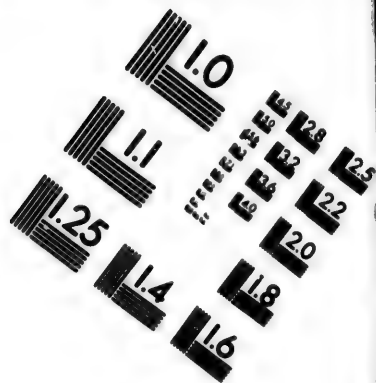
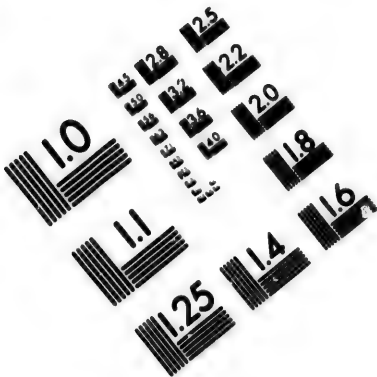
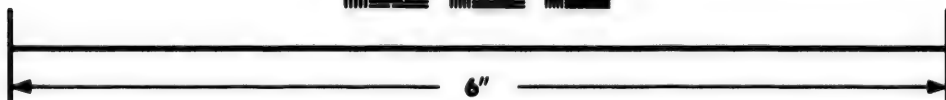
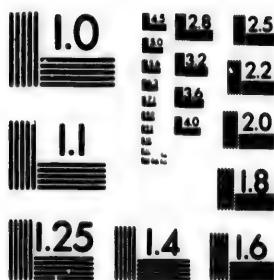


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of continued discontent. Seeing nothing to account for this, I began to remonstrate with the animal :—

“ What is it, old dog? (grunt) what is it, kith of well-beloved Norman? (growl). Have you got a *côup de lune*, Bran, that you deport yourself in this way? or do you take this rolling prairie for Leighton Park, your wild-goose master for Joe Blayfield, and this bug-a-boo you’re setting for long Tom Tucker, the deer-stealer? Ah, pup, many’s the long league we are from Leighton, and whether we ever set our six feet there again is extremely dubious to my mind, Bran. (A still deeper growl was the rejoinder.) What, again, speak out, pup, what is it winding? out with it.”

I had scarcely spoken the words when the animal sprung upon its legs, a mass of bristle from head to haunch, and gave expression to its anger in a loud and exasperated barking.

Directed by its action I now fancied I discerned amidst the ground fog of the prairie

the outlines of a human figure, which at first seemed to be in motion, then became stationary, and then again moved towards me at a good rate. Seeing it was but a single individual, and commanding as I did an extensive range of view, which secured me from surprise, I controlled my first impulse to alarm my party, and determined to await the phantom's approach.

As soon as it had come within hail I perceived it to be an Indian, and presenting my firelock warned him to advance no nearer. To this challenge he responded by spreading out the palms of his hands in sign of amity. I now observed that he was armed and in his war paint; but as though to remove any distrust I might conceive on this score, he proceeded with much display to lay down the tomahawk and short gun he carried upon the ground.

This being so far satisfactory, I then allowed him to come within discoursing distance, when pointing to his brawny chest, he said by way

of introduction, "Wahtogachto—friend of white man;" then added with emphasis, "Why is my brother waiting here when the scalping knife is drawn to slay his brethren? when the Osage is lurking round their wigwams and watching for the hour to strike his blow? My brother no wish paleface blood to flow—his paleface sisters to be rubbed out; come, then, Wahtogachto lead you, and save the Whitebell and the greyhair from the tomahawk."

He spoke with the utmost earnestness permitted to an Indian warrior, and, the matter being of such startling import, I hastened at once to the camp and roused up my companions to consult with on it.

As soon as Jannock heard the statement, he made the Sioux repeat it over to him, and then said, "By the Lord, squire, I believe the lad speaks truth; this is the redskin the young gal spoke of; the riptyles are still hanging on our trail it seems, and we may have to speak a word to them with our shoot-

in' ir'ns arter all, for this sticking so close looks ugly. Wull, if we're to give our frinds a helping hand (and I s'pose we're of one mind as to that matter) there ain't no time to lose about it, for these Osages are very devils at haar-raisin'."

There being no dissentient voice to this proposal we armed ourselves to the teeth for our work, found a spare pistol for Jonathan (he already had a rifle, which he well knew how to use), and then putting ourselves under the Sioux's guidance, bore away at a rapid rate for our friends' camp.

An hour's hard walking (indeed the Indian's pace kept us mostly on the trot) speedily brought us over the first five miles, to a grove of oak trees, where we observed our guide look about him inquiringly, and then make a full stop besides an object that lay upon the ground.

On coming up we discovered it, to our horror, to be the corpse, miserably mutilated, of William Wainwright.

His brother no sooner saw it, than flinging down his rifle he threw himself upon the prostrate form in a paroxysm of grief; he remembered they had lately parted in anger, and his distress seemed augmented beyond all control by the revulsion of his feelings from the circumstance.

The time, however, was not one to allow of their long indulgence, and he was recalled to the exigencies of the moment by Jannock's stern yet sympathetic voice.

"We must leave poor William for the present, Jonathan, and see to dealin' justice on his slayers. Come, boy, get up your shootin' ir'n, and let us see if we can't make 'em rue this business as well as ourselves."

Bryce had touched the right chord. Poor Jonathan stifled down the anguish of his heart, and thenceforth all his soul became absorbed in the single, intense desire of vengeance.

From the fatal grove to the imperilled camp was little more than two miles, and on tracing this the Indian frequently turned round to urge

upon us the necessity of caution. On arriving at the last swell of ground that intervened he bade us halt, and followed by Jannock only, crept stealthily to the summit, where both remained for some minutes engaged in observation of our enemies. As soon as the latter rejoined us, which he did alone, he said, in a whisper :

“ We shall have to slope off to the left, squire, and cross the river lower down. Wahto’s people I find are in league with these ragamuffins, and he says he can’t take part agin them, or do anything more to stead us. They’re swarming round the waggons like spring bees ; but the boys have kept them off, it seems, so far, Jonathan, and I think will be able to hold their own till we can get up to help them.”

The youth he addressed, excited almost to frenzy by occasional dropping shots from his kinsmen, urged with much earnestness an immediate attack upon the Osages from where we were ; but this was firmly tho’ gently

opposed by Jannock, who represented they were altogether too strong for such an attempt on this side. "It would be," said he, "as good as giving them our scalps with our own hands; have but a little patience, and you'll see they'll lose nothing by waitin'."

Bryce now put himself at our head, and led us in Indian file along the back of the swell that hid us from the foe, till, after about half a mile's progress, we reached the river, there some fifty yards in breadth. This we then crossed, and availing ourselves of the willows on its bank, stole along the other side till we gained a point directly opposite the farmer's camp, which, however, was yet shut out from view by a long narrow island that lay between. In this it was Bryce's intention we should post ourselves, which, favoured by a high spine-like ridge that ran along it, we succeeded (fording the intervening stream) in doing without being discovered by the enemy. A scanty growth of bushes on the top afforded us partial cover,

and we now obtained a full view, at about seventy yards off, of the beleagured party we had come to succour.

The two waggons were seen drawn up in a hollow between two little hills, so as to form two sides of a square, the third being closed by a hastily made stockade, and the remaining one having no other defence than the river, on which, however, the vehicles abutted so closely as to render impracticable all passage between them and it.

This being the side nearest ourselves, we could look into the very heart of the farmer's camp, where, amid bales of goods and articles of household furniture, the three females were seen cowering, and their four kinsmen ambushed, whilst, with their rifles pointed through the crevices, they watched the movements and awaited the onset of their savage foe. The latter also were partially visible to us, lurking amid the willows on the outer slopes of the two eminences, and waiting in fearful stillness their favourite hour, a little

before daybreak, or perchance some preconcerted signal for making the decisive rush. The moonlight fell upon their swarthy forms, and showed us many a savage face, dark with anticipation of fell deeds, or brightened by expected triumph. It rested also on the river between us, and as its tranquil stream stole by, rippling its lullaby to slumbering nature, it was difficult to imagine a scene so fair would soon become the theatre of outrage.

We had been lying for nearly an hour esconced amongst the herbage of the ridge, with our cocked rifles in full bearing on the threatened point, waiting for an opportunity of delivering an effective volley, and had begun to perceive symptoms of relaxed vigilance on the part of the garrison, when from the thick shadows of the islet shore beneath us suddenly arose the whoop of a screech owl. Jannock no sooner heard the sound than, griping me by the arm, he whispered, "as I live here's one of the riptyles right in among us ! they've set him here for a spy ;

see, his brother vagabonds have heard his cry and are drawin' down to the water for a rush—quiet, quiet, Jonathan, or you'll skear the game just as it's getting its nose into the trap. I suspicion they're goin' to charge in on the water side—see how they're creepin' along the bank, and how cleverly they steal up to the waggons—your father must surely be asleep, Jonathan—well, now, boy," said Bryce, slowly raising the redoubted Truegroove, "is the time to awaken him and pay off the score for poor William—lay on and fire when I give the word."

The savages, whilst he was making his comments (carefully watching them the while) were seen gliding stealthily along by the river bank with the evident intention of bursting into the camp by the side that had no other protection.

Some of them had already entered the water both above and below the threatened point, and were got indeed almost within

tomahawk swing of their expected victims, when, Bryce giving the word, our rifles poured forth their fatal contents, and stretched the two foremost of each attacking party dead in the shallows they were wading through.

Scarcely had our pieces been discharged, when darting from his shady lair beneath us the Indian who had given the signal plunged into the river and endeavoured to make his escape to his comrades.

For a few moments the shadow of the island shrouded his figure from our aim, but no sooner had he passed into the moonlight than instantaneous death overtook him from our three pistols, and a long shot from the farmer's camp. "That owl's screeched his last any how," was the poor wretch's funeral oration from the lips of Jannock.

This last shot shewed the Wainwrights were now on the alert, and the Indians panic-struck by the sudden blow they had received, having sought cover, Bryce permitted Jona-

than, after giving him certain private instructions, to cross the water and rejoin his family.

Deprived though they were, of five of their leading braves it was not likely that our adversaries who, much superior in number, had so perseveringly dogged our trail and knew full well the smallness of our force, would abandon their object without some further endeavour to effect it, or at any rate avenge their loss, and for our own part, even with the two parties united, there seemed little hope of being able to push our advantage farther.

Whilst these considerations were occurring to us, Jannock announced he had formed a plan which he thought would relieve us of the enemy at least for a time, and which with characteristic hardihood, he volunteered to execute in person. It was this:—

On first reconnoitring their position, he had observed their horses as well as those they had taken from the emigrants collected in a

bottom some little distance in their rear ; if these could be by any means let loose or stam-peded, their masters would be forced to quit their ambush in order to recover them. In the attendant confusion we might then re-unite our parties and strike such other blow as would deter them from molesting us further.

Our fearless volunteer, depositing his rifle with us, and armed only with his knife, entered the water at the back of the island, and swimming for some distance down the stream landed, without being seen by the Osages, on their own side. Here we lost him and waited for some time in anxious suspense for the appointed signal, occasionally exchanging greetings with our friends over the stream, when suddenly a shot was heard from their camp, followed by a warning from Jonathan that Indians had been seen on the island stealing towards us. We might now, then, hear their yell, and feel their knives in our hair at any moment.

Old Wainwright called out to us to descend to the shore over against himself, where he thought he might be able to cover us with his fire, and pay back the good service we had rendered him ; but here, unless we could find some rock or other shelter (which we in vain sought for), we should on the other hand be exposed to the aim of the unseen enemy round his camp.

Robin and myself were still debating the matter, feeling the while a vivid consciousness that we were earning our 'wrinkles' a good deal too fast to be pleasant, when the anxiously-expected signal blast was heard and at once determined our procedure. We remained a short space longer till the beat of galloping cattle became audible, then seeing the Redskins, as we expected, starting from their lair in pursuit, dashed down to the river and succeeded in joining our allies in safety.

It appeared Jannock had already instructed them through Jonathan, as to the part they were to take, and the time being ripe and the

party ready, we all, with the exception of George and Jacob Wainwright (who were left to guard their sisters), sallied forth from the waggons on our secret and avenging mission.

As had been expected, the Osages had abandoned their near position, and were now heard whooping and yelling over the plain in pursuit of their fugitive quadrupeds.

Not wishing to jeopardise our little band by proceeding too far from quarters, we halted at about a furlong's distance, and availing ourselves of a thicket of willows that bordered a bottom through which the enemy would be likely to return, we carefully concealed ourselves therein, and waited patiently for an opportunity of dealing them a telling blow.

Not many minutes had elapsed when it became evident, from their lumbering gallop growing momentarily louder and louder, that a troop of stampeded horses was approaching us, and, on their presently coming in sight, the Wainwrights at once recognised them as their own draught team, which, impelled by

panic and followed by two or three shouting savages, were tearing wildly along to their familiar station.

Young Richard proposed we should fire on the wild drovers as they passed, and so re-secure the animals so indispensable for their future movements, but ere there was well time to decide upon it, Jonathan directed our attention to another band, who, riding their re-captured steeds, were following hard on the other's tracks. Keeping close in our cover, we silently watched the latter as they drew near, to the number of a dozen or more, when to our unspeakable astonishment and dismay, we beheld by the bright moonlight, his hands bound behind his back, and his legs tied under his horse's belly — our brave, self-devoted Jannock in their midst.

Though so greatly out-numbered we resolved to attempt his rescue at all hazards, and concerted a plan for doing so on the instant. As the Indians passed our ambush we delivered, at a given signal, a general volley,

Jonathan and myself aiming at and dismounting the two guards who rode at the prisoner's side, and Robin leveling at the head of the animal he rode. The piece of the latter, however, unfortunately missing fire, went near defeating our purpose altogether.

Bryce, as soon as he saw us, called out, forgetful of his own safety, "Back! back to camp! or they'll be cuttin' you off." These had nearly been his last words. The tomahawk of the Indian behind him was already raised to cleave his skull, when at that critical moment, Hood, who had refreshed his priming, discharged an effective shot, and the stricken "mustang," forging madly forwards, tore away with its helpless rider in the trail of the cattle that had first passed.

The fire from the rest of the party had taken more or less effect, which we scarcely however stopped to note; for, alarmed by Jannock's warning, after hastily re-charging our pieces, we turned our whole attention to effecting a retreat to our quarters. The band

of Osages we were engaged with had for the most part now dismounted, and, reinforced by numerous stragglers, followed as closely up, scattering themselves for vantage over the ground, and plying us with arrows from any cover afforded by its herbage or inequalities.

Notwithstanding these manœuvres, several of their number had already fallen beneath our fire, and we were now within a little of regaining the camp, when a yell was heard on our flank, and a fresh party of savages were seen running up at full speed to cut us off from it.

There was, therefore, nothing left for it but to turn our backs at once on our former foes, and try our speed with the latter in a run for life.

The crafty Indians had taken the inner line along the river side, where lay the entrance made for the occasion to the encampment, and as the two parties converged to this point at equal speed, and nearly abreast, got up, un-

fortunately, in time to shut off the important passage.

In the headlong impulse of our flight, we had run right in among the frightened waggon horses, which, when cut loose by Jan-nock, had instinctively made for their wonted station, and in this unpromising position, overtaken on the instant by both bands of our pursuers, we at once found ourselves engaged in a hand to hand conflict, with at least three times our numbers.

This was overwhelming odds, and in this sort of struggle our superior weapons were of comparatively little service. Those of us whose pieces were still loaded had barely time to deliver a last discharge, which felled the foremost of our pursuers, and then the cleaving tomahawk, and keen-edged knife were alone relied on to inflict, or avert death.

Snorting and groaning in the midst of the *melee*, the unfortunate waggon team served as shields from many a well meant blow, and

enabled us to give telling returns to them with our trusty hunting knives.

Young Jonathan, who was nearest to me, and, boy as he was, fought with the tact of a man, and asperity of a wild cat, disposed of more than one Indian in this way, sheltering himself from their blows, when hard pressed, with wonderful activity, among the animals. He even found opportunity of giving aid to his father, who, armed only with his empty firelock, had been set upon by two savages at once, one of whom having caught his cumbersome weapon in his hand, was on the point of despatching him with his long knife, when Jonathan, whose slight frame had at last been for a moment prostrated, sprung from the ground at the assailant, and stabbed him to the heart with his own. The tomahawk of the other was already raised over the old man's head, when a jet of flame issued from the waggon behind him, and the Osage fell dead to the earth, by a shot fired within the vehicle.

At the commencement of the struggle I had brought down one of our adversaries, by the last discharge of my rifle, and was defending myself with my hunting knife, resolved, like the rest of us, if indeed we were to be 'rubbed out,' as seemed likely, to give the enemy as dear a bargain as might be, when a stunning blow on the head, from a tomahawk, laid me senseless on the ground.

How long I lay there, I know not, but on coming to myself, I found the fray was over, and the place strewn with several carcasses, both of men and horses.

Whilst endeavouring to raise myself up, in order to ascertain the results of the conflict, and gain a more satisfactory position, my ears were suddenly saluted by a voice hard by me, sharpened and cramped by pain.

"Wull, squire, you're comin' to at last; I was afeard you had about gone under; can you make out, think ye, to snip these blasted thongs, that are cutting my flesh like so many butcher knives. I've been wishin' me dead

and buried, I have, all this time, lying here to as little purpose while you've been having your spree out; thankee—now this—so—now the knife—now let me see if I can't pay off these gentry for their kind services, and larn 'em the right uses of a buffalo hide. You've beaten 'em off tho', that's a fact; it's the shots from the waggon as done it—I'm afeard Jonathan has got nicked tho', and the old man so'thin' scored about the sconce, but we'll in, and see."

Whilst assisting each other to rise, Bryce explained to me how I had happened to find him in his present predicament.

It appeared he had been discovered and run down upon the prairie, shortly after achieving his main object, by some mounted Indians, and fastened for security in the manner we had witnessed to a half-wild mustang, which, after receiving its wound from Robin, had carried him helplessly away hither, where it had fallen in death among its household mates.

What were his sensations in this position, with a conflict for life and death (his own included) going on about him, may be best left to the reader's imagination.

The strife, I say, as it stood, was ended, but an occasional dropping shot from the waggons still showed that the neighbourhood of the foe was apprehended.

Having at length got upon our legs, and notified our presence by an intelligible hail, we rounded the camp by the water side, and found ourselves, to the great joy of both parties, once more among our old associates.

CHAPTER IX.

NEARLY all of them were suffering from wounds more or less severe, and on entering the enclosure we found the three women busily engaged in various offices for their relief.

By the light of a fire it had been found necessary to kindle for the purpose Hannah was binding up her father's head, which showed several ugly cuts, though happily none of a very dangerous character. Jonathan, who had received a slight hurt on the same part, was "playing the doctor on his own behalf," whilst his two remaining sisters divided their

cares between their elder brother and our Robin, whose shoulder bore token of a severe tomahawk blow, not so considerable, however, as to prevent him eyeing with a good deal of attention the fair form of the eldest maiden, as, with sleeves tucked up, and face glowing with affectionate anxiety, she rendered her loving service to her parent.

The poor females, during our absence, and especially whilst the deadly conflict was going on in which they held so dear a stake, had, as might have been expected, passed a fearful time of it, so much so indeed as well nigh to make them wish for some of the strokes that were being dealt so liberally about them, to shorten the agony of their suspense.

The favourable issue of the combat was, as averred by Jannock, mainly owing to the two youths who had been left as their protectors.

To these had been allotted all the spare fire-arms that could be mustered, so as to make up by the completeness of their equip-

ment for the paucity of their numbers, consisting of their own two rifles, their unfortunate brother William's, which he had left behind him on his ill-starred errand to the oak grove, and Bryce Jannock's Truegroove, together with a double-barrelled fowling-piece and pair of pistols, making in all a battery of eight shots.

So soon as they became aware the fight was tending towards them, they had got into the more advanced of the waggons, looped up the awning so as to gain an open space for shooting through, and thus, as the foe came up, with every advantage of position, freshness, and *sang froid*, had dealt (particularly George, whose listless mien covered something of Jannock's quiet promptitude) those telling shots which had freed us one by one of our opponents at the most critical moments of the battle.

The second circumstance that operated in our favour was the narrow space in which the fray had been confined, preventing their

full force from being brought to bear on us at once; and the third, as before mentioned, the opportune presence of the waggon horses.

My own injury was of but trifling moment, the force of the blow having been deadened by a stout India handkerchief that happened to be within my hat at the time.

Sleep was little likely to visit our eyelids during the remainder of the night, but, exhausted by their bodily injuries, excitement, and fatigue, the harassed household (Jacob excepted, who with Jannock and myself had volunteered to take the remaining watch) laid themselves down by their camp fire to snatch what repose was in their power.

My station being on the river side opposite the island, I esconced myself under the tail of the waggon, and was ruminating on the late events and the ill augury they offered for my own prospects, when I beheld Hannah, her ministrations ended, come down to the water with a pail in her hand as if for the purpose of filling it, instead of which, however, she

set the empty utensil on the ground, and sitting down besides it gave vent to her overwrought feelings in a passionate flood of tears.

I went up and endeavoured to console her by representing how effectually the enemy had been repulsed, and danger, for the present, at least, averted, and that though there was certainly some damage to deplore, we had also a great deliverance to be thankful for. On which, checking for a moment the flow of her grief, she said, "Oh, sir, what a night we've had—to you how much we owe ! Yes, I do feel grateful—grateful to the Lord, and grateful to you, whom He has sent at our sore need to save us ; but oh ! with poor William gone, and my father and all of them so badly hurt—all so near being ——" The afflicted girl was unable to finish the sentence, and the tears again found their way plentifully from her eyes.

As soon as she became somewhat more composed I inquired into the circumstances

attending the fate of her younger brother, which, with much interruption from her feelings, she related to me as follows—

It appeared that, chafed by some rebuke he had received from his father in reference to his late quarrel with Jonathan, William had quitted the camp in the afternoon for the alleged purpose of cutting some oak wood for the damaged wheel in a grove some little distance off, which was the nearest place it could be got.

Time passed on, and, still remaining absent, Hannah, in her anxiety, got out her Bible sooner than was usual, in order that their father, who always liked the family circle to be complete at prayer time, might take the earlier note of his son's absence, "when," said she, "just as he was beginning to remark upon it, another of those headless arrows that startled us so a few nights since came whirring down among us. We were all dreadfully alarmed at it this time on account of William being away, and my father

and brothers took their guns immediately, and went in a body to bring him back. This it, alas ! was doomed they should never do (here poor Hannah again gave way to her emotion, and then continued). It has pleased the Almighty to take our brother from us, but had not my father and the rest set out to search for him, we should surely every one of us have shared his fate, for no sooner had they reached the first rise than they found these horrid savages had stolen all round the camp, and were obliged to retreat instantly in order to save sisters and me from being tomahawked by them. And so we could do nothing more to help poor William, and were all watching and mourning in this most miserable state when you and Robin and Mr. Jannock came up just in time to save our lives. And Robin too has got sorely hurt in fighting for us ——”

“ He don’t mind that a divot when it’s to help you, Hannah,” quoth that individual in person, coming up at the moment, and his

gallant speech and the stout heart it bespoke seemed to have a renovating influence on the spirits of the drooping fair one.

"Father thinks you had better go in and rest ye now, and so think I, syne you've had sich a skeary time on't, and you needn't fear the wild men any more, he says, for we've guv'em their gruel and sent 'em to bed, and I've got another arm yet, and the better of the two to ensure ye rest in peace and rise up in safety, Hannah."

And the sorrowing maiden, drying her tears, complied with the kindly summons.

Morning at length dawned, and as soon as it became sufficiently light to view our ground, a party of four, including old Wainwright himself, set out for the clump of oak wood, to bring back the body of his slaughtered son for the purpose of burial.

The place was soon reached, and while the father was indulging his sorrow over the corpse, and Jannock and myself were employing ourselves in constructing a litter to bear it, Robin

was sent off to a neighbouring knoll to ascertain if the coast was clear, and warn us in good time if any danger should present itself.

Our task was but half performed when we beheld him running back at the top of his speed, shouting out, as he did so, "Indians! Indians!" On coming up, he affirmed he had seen a large mounted band approaching from the westward, which he computed to be near a hundred in number, as they stretched in a long line over the prairie, and he had counted five caps in the first rank.

Jannock smiled when he heard this. "Caps, lad! first rank! we needn't be in a hurry, squire, I'm thinkin'; a hundred Injyns with caps on! that'll be a newity to me, Robin; come, we'll go have another peep at the bogles."

So saying he strode off towards the place of observation, and having carefully examined the objects of alarm, returned with that leisurely gait that at once dispelled apprehension. He pronounced the approaching

cavalcade to be a company of traders—in all probability, the very one we had been so long looking for, and in a few minutes their files were seen descending the slope towards us, when, rejoiced at the opportune arrival of such needful succour, we promptly went forth to meet them.

It proved to be as we conjectured, the brigade in which were the two trappers we had hoped to engage as auxiliaries, and moreover, to our friend Wainwright's equal surprise and satisfaction, he here met with his American brother-in-law, who had been compelled, by a series of Indian outrages, to abandon his purchase in the Sioux country, and was now, with his family, and what live stock he had been able to save, in full retreat for the settlements.

This, tho' of course a disappointment to himself, was a truly providential circumstance to our Lincolnshire friend, who, with great part of his cattle killed, and soon to be deprived of our assistance, would have found

himself, but for this chance in a very forlorn and desperate position.

As we wended our way back to the camp, carrying the remains of the murdered youth, I took the opportunity of conferring with the two stark trappers, who had been recommended to us by our friend the gunsmith. To my extreme chagrin, however, I found neither money nor persuasion could prevail either upon one or the other to turn back with us, till they had enjoyed their month or two's holiday in the settlements; nor had we better success with several others of their class whom we sounded to the same end.

This was truly a heavy blow and great discouragement to us, but having already advanced so far on our enterprise, there was no course left us but to persevere.

Having stayed, therefore, over the funeral, and made a last vain attempt to shake the resolution of the two voyageurs, we once more (for the last time), bade farewell to our worthy countrymen, whom Jonathan of course re-

mained with, and proceeded on our return to our own camp.

Thanks to its sheltered situation, it had remained entirely unmolested, and poor Antoine, who had passed but an anxious time of it during our absence, welcomed us back with absolute capers of delight.

Getting in motion by sunrise the next morning, we pursued for many days together our lonely course over the prairie, meeting with no living object, save an occasional prairie fowl, too wild to admit of approach, and our dreary labour varied only by the periodical halts for refreshing ourselves and animals.

The waggon, as it rolled over the hardened ground, experienced slight obstruction from its vegetation, which had become thin and stunted, affording but little nutriment to the cattle, and cropped by them with evident disrelish.

The country, indeed, as before observed, had altogether altered from the rich luxuriant

meadows we had first crossed, and bore more and more as we advanced, the unmistakeable impress of a desert.

After the first few days of travel in it the eye becomes wearied with its sameness, and hails, with an exile's eagerness, any unwonted feature—any clump of trees—bosky brake—lonely hill—or even dried up water course, that may afford relief from its monotony. Yet when the noonday sun had sunk, and freed from its mastering glare, the faculties of the wayfarer revive, he may find even in this signless waste, an interesting field of contemplation.

It may then come perchance upon his mind that in the plains around him, as in those of Egypt and Assyria, he looks upon the grave of extinct nations and departed empires, which a still greater lapse of time has even more sweepingly obliterated, and which he may amuse his fancy with the fond endeavour to resuscitate. He may crest the mounds before him with the walls of cities—people their

silent slopes with humming crowds—raise up the crumbled halls, the sleeping shade of royalty—muster its time-quelled armies round about—and plant in yon sea-like tract a nation ‘numerous as the stars of heaven.’

He will figure them heathens, unblest by the light that saves, worshipping Astarte in the queen of night, and crushed beneath some central tyranny, which ever in these even regions, seems to find its peculiar sphere of exercise. He will then see corruption sap their strength, the enemy’s inroads wear them down (even as may be seen at present in a neighbouring state), till an entire people would become extinct, together with, in the lapse of ages, their dwellings, their monuments, their very sepulchres.

Such, to his apprehensive fancy, may be the vision of its former days suggested by the “rolling prairie,” whose very soil seems to tell their exhaustive might, and begrudge in its meagre herbage even the dole of a decent winding-sheet.

Pushing our way under fine autumnal skies, we had travelled several weeks since parting with our English friends, when, our stock of fresh meat having "given out," throwing us thereby sooner than was to be wished upon our cherished reserved stores, it was determined to lie by for a day and try our luck in hunting for procuring a fresh supply.

The resolution was partly prompted by our having reached a tract of country whose appearance gave better promise of success than any we had lately seen, showing a somewhat richer growth of grass, and affording in the brakes that intersected it, a likely harbourage for game.

Coming, a little before sunset, upon a convenient pool of water, we accordingly unharnessed the wearied mules, despatched our evening meal, and then Jannock and myself, shouldering our rifles, went forth to reconnoitre the scene of our intended hunt.

Passing over a small space of prairie, we came upon a wild ravine of varying width

and character; here almost choked up with intermingled grass and briars, there broadening into sheltered bays, where, secure from ruffling winds, many wild flowers still gemmed the ground, and threw their unspent sweets upon the senses.

My comrade eyed it with professional complacency; it was a spot well qualified to please him, affording fair promise at least of what we wanted. "I'll bet a plug o' Virginy we raise so'thin' purpose-like hereaway," was his encouraging remark.

After skirting it for some length, we descended its rugged sides, and whilst I amused myself in looking at the wild-flowers, Jan-nock went forward to a point where the ravine made a sudden turn. Following him with my eye, I presently perceived him silently signaling me to come up, on doing which, he laid his hand on my shoulder, and pointed my attention to the object which had fixed his own.

Sloping to the brake in which we stood was

a long prairie swell, on the summit of which, at a distance of some three hundred yards, drawn like a rock against the empurpled sky, and stirless as its statued semblance from the mounds of Nimroud, stood a solitary buffalo bull.

Magnified by the relief of its position, it presented a truly imposing figure, and seemed in that crystal atmosphere to be so near, that we could discern even the hairy curls upon its shoulder glistening in the purple sunlight. We stood for several minutes regarding it with silent interest, when the necessities of our condition recurring to me, I proposed in a whisper to my comrade, who was quietly smiling at my absorption, that we should forthwith convert him into buffalo beef.

"Well, you may say you've seen buffalo at last; come to grizzly by and by; 'taint no use tho' pullin' on the critter—old bull—no gettin' teeth into him—break a pick-axe—be kearful not to skear the old chap as we go

back, and we'll see (an all go right) if we can pick up his youngsters in the morning."

We accordingly returned with all circumspection to our camp, taking from time to time a backward peep at the lonely bison, which remained in his solemn immobility to the last.

Jannock, I had noticed, in his keen but furtive way, had more carefully examined the ground as we came back, and on one occasion gone a little aside to pick up some object that had caught his eye.

Having seated ourselves on the grass for a parting whiff, this he now produced from his pocket, looked at it long and narrowly, and then, turning to me, commenced his discourse in this wise:

"I won't ask you, squire, if you've ever been hunted for in the old country —; well, you may snigger, but such has been my fortin' more than onst, and a sweatin' sort o' pastime it is. Now, I'm older, so'thin', than I was,

and shorter in the wind a long chalk, but if you'd like to try your chance, it strikes me you've only to turn out arter that bull buffalo we've been sightin'. Time was when the critter seemed to go down all the sweeter for a relish of Injyn sarse, but sitiuated as we are at present with hands mostly green, and few at that, and a long trail to follow up, I think it only dootiful to tell you that if we go out to-morrow arter game, we are quite as like as not to get bagged ourselves. There's Injyn 'sign' in yon gulley, not two days old, and see what I've picked up but awhile syn." He put into my hands a strip of green buffalo hide, which showed evident marks of recent rending. "That leather's been snapped syn last sun rise; the dog, too, has been oneasy ever syne we sot down here; it's possible the pup's green like the rest on us, and has got wind of the old bull yonder, which will be new game to it, I reckon; but I rayther judge from its ways it's so'thin' uglier still."

"It must be the devil himself then, Bryce,

for surely nothing else in nature can be uglier than an old buffalo bull."

"That is, more mischievous and malicious—you onderstand, but lettin' alone dog and leather, there's so'thin' tells me—a wee sma' vice that comes o' forty years exper'ence, that whether it be them Osages we've flogged, or See-hoo on the hunt or war path, there's red men about us at this moment within reach of a smart halloo; so we'll jest run the waggon into the bottom yonder, and I'll head up your mare to it to keep the mules from strayin', for they'll stick to the cretur like 'lassus, and by keepin' a bright watch thro' the night and all quiet we may slip away softly by day break."

Laying by my pipe at this information I assisted him in taking the precautionary steps he had suggested, and being myself told for the third watch, lay down to rest till my turn of duty should arrive.

It was past midnight when I was aroused, and rising with the stiff reluctance of a jaded post-horse, I repaired to my station on the

summit of the nearest swell, taking my blanket with me as a guard against the corrosive night air.

A harsh unpleasant wind had got up, which breathed in low moans through the rugged dingle, whilst above, the moon, now in its last quarter and but newly risen, showed its wan crescent over a bank of clouds.

Whether we worship her as a goddess or salute her as a sweetheart, the sacred orb of night must ever attach our sympathies, awakening the memory, kindling the imagination, and softening the heart; elevating us for the time above the dead level and groveling routine of life.

Here on the bleak prairie knoll I fully recognized her influence, and was in the full flow of that mental oblectation which solaces the present from the stores of the past and future, when my eye was caught by the form of Jan-nock, followed by the trusty bloodhound, moving from the camp towards me.

"There's so'thin' keeps the dog afret,

Squire," he whispered, on coming up, "and tells me there's mischief stirring. I reckon I'll take a short stretch along the praira, and see if I can get into the secret of the matter!"

On hearing this I straightway offered to accompany him, and leaving my blanket behind, whose color might have attracted observation, we proceeded cautiously up the wind, guided by the action of the hound, and halting on every rise to gather by the eye or ear any floating sign that might assist us in detecting danger.

It happened in the course of our walk that having to tarry awhile for the purpose of fastening my moccassin, I observed Jannock, who had meanwhile gone forward, come to a sudden halt.

On going up I found him standing in the inside of a circle formed of buffalo skulls, whitened by time and weather into the semblance of marble, and wearing in the pallid moonlight a mystic, monumental aspect. In the centre rose a little pyramid of the same

materials, built with much compactness and greenstained by time. The grass grew short about it, exposing the spectral pile in its full significance, and the heavy nightwind as it swept into the swale whistled and moaned through its ghastly masonry.

"There!" remarked Jannock, in a low tone as I came up, "what make ye o' this now, squire? droll, ain't it?"

I could not discover the drollery; it was the witching time of night when the spirits are most impressible, and the spot under the circumstances was one to inspire only interest and awe.

"Is it not extraordinary, Bryce," said I giving vent to the thoughts which it suggested, "that from the earliest ages and the oldest regions of the globe down to this recent fabric of the Indians, we find these curious rings constructed by heathen nations. In the old country now you may see them built of stones, whose date neither writing nor tradition has declared, that have stood the wear

of twenty—aye of thirty centuries, and these it is likely are but copies from older lands where the human race was first planted, and religious ritual first cultivated. This ring now that we look at, I should say it had reference to some religious usage. Do you imagine these Osages and Sioux and the rest of them ever offer up human sacrifices to their Gods—Bel, for instance, or Astarte?"

"If Bel means belly, I'll not deny but they'll bolt a bit of human now and then when 'casion sarves, but their favoryte eatables is hoss, dog, and bufflo; when fairly gorged with these, it ain't so easy to 'start' 'em unless, maybe, with a rifle shot or war-whoop, or so'thin' o' that sort."

"Then again, whence this circular formation?"

"Belike it was to dance round, or maybe, some of their braves is buried here; one often finds these bones by Injyn burial places."

"No, Bryce; it has taken its shape from

the divinities they worshipped—the sun—the moon—or more probably still the general cope of heaven, which would thus be the pantheon of their Gods. Then again the circle is the emblem of eternity. Among the ancient Romans—you've heard of the Romans, Bryce—trinkets of this form were exchanged as pledges of perpetual love; I once knew a young lady—"

"Whisht, squire! look at the dog."

The bloodhound who was lying at our feet lifted up his head, and after sniffing the passing air uttered a low admonitory growl, contenting himself with which he resumed his former posture whilst we remained a moment silent conjecturing what his action might import.

"A stray buffalo perhaps."

Bryce shook his head dissentingly.

I continued, "I once knew a young lady—"

"Whisht, whisht, squire! darn the young

lady (that I should say so) d'ye hear nothing now?"

We again ceased speaking, and listened attentively. The moon had by this become obscured by clouds, and standing as we were between two slopes, our field of vision was but limited; on the ear, however, there now grew a distant trampling sound, like that of galloping herds. Now it came loud and full, as though borne from the summit of a swell—now it faded away as if lost in a hollow—and now again we thought it neared us, and listened till the straining sense gave way, leaving us as uncertain as before. Yet ever on the haunted ear, now full, now faint, now up, now down, varying, yet incessant, like the roar of ocean, came, over the night-clipt wold, the noise of that multitudinous galloping.

I looked at the resting dog to see how its instinct might explain the matter, but though by its half-raised ears and uneasy air of

vigilance it evidently gave token of alarm, it was impossible to gather further whether the sounds in question were the cause of it; then I glanced at Jannock, who, as he met my eye, remarked, "The buffaloes are having fine shines to-night for sartain; they must have been smartly hunted to keep 'em a gaddin' at this rate. The red-skins will be out pretty rank, I take it, and we may have a hard job to get by them; wull, what was you a-saying now about the lady?"

"I was telling you, Bryce, I once knew a lady who wore one of these ring tokens as a pledge of eternal attachment from her lover; it was a snake, with its tail in its mouth—"

"She must ha' been o' the rattler genius, I reckon, that gal."

"Why, as far as tongue went, she was a rattler, certainly."

"Next o' kin, belike, to Kentucky Dan's wife, whose clapper never stopped till she had screeched herself to death, when the old chap was so j'yed, he paid her a compliment might

ha' served a better mate, by writin' on her gravestun'—"

The speaker stopped, for at that instant there smote our ears a sound that seemed scarce of this world—a yell so frightful and unearthly, that though partly deadened by the distance, it for the moment silenced my companion, and curdled the very blood in my veins with horror.

"Heavens! What can that be, Bryce?"

"By writin' on her gravestun' 'here lies a screamer.' Aye, ye unchristianed imps, I knowed ye was knelled nigh. What can it be? why, just what I've suspicioned all along; Injyns, aud, what's more, we've nigh run head-foremost into them. They're located, I somethink, in the dingle, higher up, and a massy it is they haven't got our wind; the critters 'll be divertin' themselves with a buffalo feast or scalp dance. That cry sounded uncommon like a scalpin' yell, and I think it comes from Seehoo throats to boot."

Whilst my blood was recovering its wonted

flow, the hunter, resting on his rifle, mused on the fearful interruption for some minutes in silence; then erecting himself, and shouldering his weapon, said with the calm decision that characterized him, "Squire, I must have a peep at the blackguards—see who they are, and what they're arter; if we larn this, we may either make up to or av'id them; if not, we shall be boggling unawares on their track, and finishing our fa'n hunt in a way we've little mind for."

As his resolution seemed taken I did not attempt to alter it, but again volunteered to second him in his new adventure, an offer he at once set aside, with a quiet but peremptory "wouldn't do no ways—sp'il all—better make tracks hum, and when Robin has the watch (don't trust the Frencher to-night), tell the lad to keep his eyes skinned and his hand spry."

With these compendious orders I was fain to return to camp, and my watch having presently expired, threw myself once more on my sheepskin.

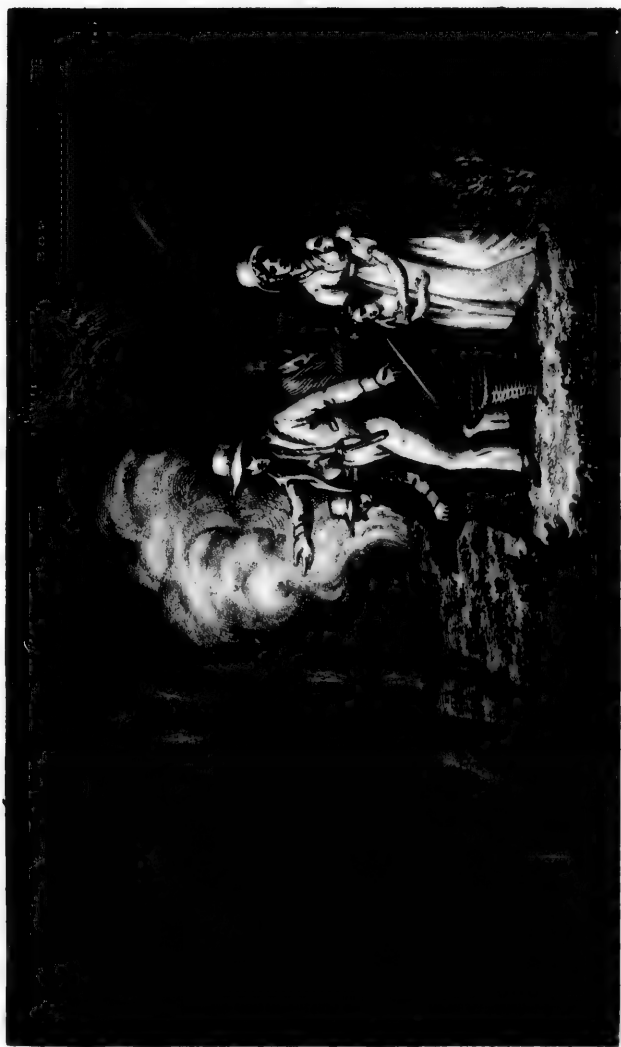
CHAPTER X.

THOUGH harassed with anxieties about my comrade, and in momentary expectation of being roused by an Indian on-fall, nature claimed her dues, and I speedily sank into a deep but troubled sleep.

Induced by the dismal impressions made during our late excursion, a villanous dream came over me, repeating its incidents and imagery with a multitude of ephialtic varieties. Again the cry of horror rang in my ears; the 'blood-boltered' form of an Indian warrior approached me with uplifted tomahawk. I felt even the goblin's hand upon my breast,

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and awaking with a start of terror was greeted by "Up! up! Lord love ye, squire; ye're as kittle as a young stirk," from the returned and indefatigable Jannock. "We must be up at onst, and steal a morning's march on the Seehoo whilst the dew's on the 'arth, and they're sleepin' off their last night's cram. Robin, lad, put a good lick of grease to the axles, for if they get squeakin', they'll soon set us squeakin' ourselves. I've put a muzzle on the pup, for the fine cretur's a spice too lively; and hark ye, Antoine, you must contrive to stop them lantern jaws o' yourn, too, and keep your 'dews' and 'dabbles' inside your throat, unless you want 'em lettin' out through a fresh slit."

It was yet but the first glimmer of the morning twilight when we got under weigh, going off at a bold angle from our former course, and directly away from our wild unacceptable neighbours.

The hunter went on well in advance to choose out and indicate our route, whilst the

remainder of us turned our whole attention to conducting the waggon safely and noiselessly according to his signals.

As the day opened, his figure might be seen looming clearer and clearer against the brightening sky, and at length after three hours' travel, we beheld it come to a standstill in a grassy bottom, which told us the hour had arrived to snatch a hasty, but necessary meal.

Bryce now took the opportunity of giving me a brief account of his over night's reconnaissance.

He had approached, he said, quite close to the Indians' camp, "snaking himself (to use his own words), along the gully till he could have pitched his powder horn into their fire, and made 'em yell agin grain." He pronounced them a war party of Dalcotahs or Sioux,—thirty in number, having with them two prisoners (Delawares, he thought), whom they had been compelling to run the gauntlet to the horrid music that had thrilled us so

drearily during the night. He had got a view of the scene towards its close. The captives had escaped for the time, by their agility, and reached the painted post which gave them safety; indeed Bryce thought there was no present purpose of putting them to death, that the Sioux were merely amusing themselves after their buffalo banquet, and would probably take them to the head quarters of their tribe to await the decision of the general council. "I somethink," remarked he, "I seen one of the lads down east when I was thar years ago, and the Delawares, I know, have tracked west only o' late; they ca'd him 'Peg-top,' did the settlers, and a fine smart copperskin he was; clear grit, too."

"Heigh!" added the hunter, with the vivacity of a bright thought, "if we could only now loose him and his cumrade from their bonds and get them to j'in our party, we'd just be made men, and might laugh at all the Philistines atween here and Bighorn."

I could only reply by a barren wish that Providence might so ordain it.

With our eyes and ears ever turned in the direction of our back trail, we rapidly despatched our food, and then again harnessed our hardy team to lay yet another stage between ourselves and the dreaded Sioux.

After travelling two hours more, by which time the sun had risen some degrees, Jannock and myself, who were riding together in advance, on topping one of the prairie swells, came suddenly upon two buffaloes feeding in the swale below.

Our empty larder ever on our minds we pricked instantaneously in chase, he after one—I after the other, as fast as our ill-fed steeds could be urged. The two animals, which were both females, made off in different directions at the first burst, and absorbed in the pursuit of my own game I soon lost sight once for all of my companion.

Up and down we sped over the rolling plain, the reduced condition of my animal disabling me from doing more than just keeping the quarry in sight, till at length, after a chase of good three leagues it disappeared altogether from view behind one of the countless prairie swells. On reaching this elevation no sign of living thing was to be seen, and though the rank grass that lay in front might readily account for its disappearance, I was altogether at a loss to determine in which direction it had escaped.

Foiled, fatigued, and disheartened, I now felt it needful to retrace my way, and getting off my wearied beast, led it slowly along by the trail rope in the direction I fondly imagined would enable me to strike the trail of my party.

Notwithstanding, however, my experience of the wilderness, I found myself confounded by its sameness, and nearly the whole of the day was spent in wandering over the arid waste, almost deafened by the incessant

"cheep" of grasshoppers, a blazing sun overhead, and a burning thirst rendering both man and horse indifferent to everything but the speediest means of satisfying it.

Evening already approached, and I was beginning to feel something of that anxiety which is apt to beset the wildered traveller, when on reaching one of the innumerable swells around, I perceived standing quietly in the coarse grass about half a mile ahead, the identical animal (as I believe) that I had chased to so little purpose in the morning. Leaping into my saddle I again spurred "Yolande" in pursuit of it.

Though able to get along at but a slow rate, I was not long in perceiving the buffalo (which speedily winded me) was labouring under a similar disability, and to a yet greater degree. My mare, moreover, had some prairie blood in her veins, and made up in bottom what she wanted in speed, so that little by little I began to gain upon the fugitive, and at length drew so near as to be on

the point of levelling my gun for a telling shot, when all of a sudden I beheld her tail and haunches flung up into the air, and the next moment, the entire animal disappear from sight.

It had in fact gone down some hole or precipice which my excitement had prevented me from seeing, and I furthermore felt the immediate and unpleasant conviction that I must inevitably (the interval being too short to admit of reining up) go down after it.

Almost as quickly as the thought, down it we accordingly dashed like lightning—

A headlong plunge—crash, and roll, is all I remember of the ensuing two hours, during which I lay prostrate and insensible in the position I had been so unceremoniously pitched into.

The shock had given me a thorough stunning, but that was all ; and on coming to myself I arose sound in wind and limb, and had moreover the satisfaction of seeing my trusty

steed standing by me, apparently uninjured also.

On the declivity a little above me lay the luckless buffalo, jammed between two fallen trees, and on the point of expiring, with an arrow sticking in its side. From this, I inferred it had been lately hunted by the Indians, and thus received what must have been its virtual death wound.

The place where this mishap had occurred was an extraordinary break in the prairie, which here descended as by a huge step to a lower level. This step or bank was some thirty feet in height, sloping at rather an acute angle, and could be seen, from where I stood, extending for miles and miles along the plain, retaining the same character and elevation, and darkened here and there by patches of lofty timber. It was at one of these wooded spots I had made my descent, getting a few bruises only, from fallen logs, as I did so.

The sun being near to setting as I got up,

I ventured to wind my horn as a signal to Jannock, if perchance he should be within range, of my whereabouts, tho' I did it not without some misgiving the sounds might reach other ears than they were intended for, and then, there being little chance of my re-joining him ere nightfall, I quietly prepared to make my bivouack on the spot.

With this view I set to work to collect some litter of the trees about me, to make my fire of.

Dear bought experience had taught me the habit of constantly travelling with my knapsack on, and profiting by my prudence, I found, at hand, the materials for a supper, and means of cooking it.

The quart tin, that served me for a kettle was filled from an extemporized mud basin, into which I had trained a slender thread of water that oozed from the caked soil at the foot of the bank, and with a cutlet from the buffalo cow, and plenteous draught of tea, I made out a good and renovating meal.

My mare, Yolande, which had for some time shewed symptoms of restlessness, at length attracted my attention, by uttering an unmistakeable moan, and on examining it closely I discovered it had received an injury on its fore leg, and was in a fair way for becoming lame. The knee, I found to be much swollen, and the whole limb indeed suffering from a severe sprain, received, no doubt, in its rude descent into the timber brake. Tho' my situation rendered it a matter of such vital import, I could do little for its relief save by carefully bathing the hurt part, and then, released from harness, leading it to the little spring hard by, there to eat, drink, or rest as it listed. This done, I climbed over the fallen trunks to the higher part of the bank where, stretching myself under a towering cottonwood, and lighting my pipe, I at once enjoyed the solace of repose, and a more leisurely survey of the spacious panorama I commanded.

The wide expanse of prairie had little to

distinguish it from the tracts we had so long been toiling over, save that it bore rather less of the "rolling" character, and was broken in the distance by an isolated "butte" or mound of rather remarkable shape. But at the present time its too familiar features, its wild and waving swells clothed with their rusty herbage to the sky line, with the solitary hill in the distance and massy timber round about, were gleaming in the light of an almost preternatural looking sunset.

The entire cope of heaven was suffused with the richest crimson, intensifying in brilliancy as it approached the West, till at the very verge of the horizon a wide-stretched luminous streak, like fire, terminated the gorgeous show.

On the broad surface of the plain this fervid coloring was now reflected, steeping its russet herbage in a blood-red glow, tinting the far off peak with halcyon hues, and branding the stems of the trees around me with that lurid

sheen so vividly portrayed in the bandit scenes of Salvatore.

The day's heat mists, condensed by the cooler air, while softening the chromatic splendour of the scene, presented it more dream-like to the senses; whilst the absence of all sounds of life, of all movement, save that of the evening shadows as they crept over the purpling waste from some bolder swell, completed the charmed character of the prospect.

Whilst silently admiring its marvels I could not, however, help feeling my situation was one of perplexity, if not of peril. I was altogether ignorant of the whereabouts of my party, and entertained little hope they would be able to track me through the devious course of my late hunt; it was still less likely I should discover *them*, and the condition of my horse now presented a new, and indeed far the most formidable difficulty.

It was indeed easy to see in its every motion

the animal was becoming dead lame, and, spite of its day's fast, had scarcely the stomach to take a fair nip at its food. Should it be no better on the morrow, what sort of travelling should I make through the untold leagues of grass that lay around me nearly as high as myself?

It was a consideration that seemed to grow in gravity the more I dwelt on it.

To dispel the dreary silence and uneasy feeling it created in me, I seized my horn once more and blew a rousing blast over the plain—a second—then a third, and was on the point of putting by the instrument and laying me down for the night, when—could I have heard aright? Yes; lowly and faintly, but distinctly audible, came the note of an answering bugle, apparently from the distant “butte” in front, but so soft, sweet, and low, that but for my being familiar with the key I might have set it down for one of those ringing murmurs that amuse the ear of a summer's eve. My rueful horse too recognised the sound,

pricked up its ears, and answered the air borne challenge with a sonorous neigh.

There, then, in that certain spot were Robin and Jannock only a few leagues off, and the sense of their propinquity inspired me with renewed cheerfulness. But for what cause, and with what object had they reached a position which lay considerably southward of our route, and but a few hours past was indeed quite invisible? This was a mystery. Might not that horn be some enchanted signal to lure a lost traveller to his doom?

I smiled to myself at the conceit, and, spreading my blanket at the root of the friendly cotton wood, lay down to prepare myself by sleep for the toils and adventures of the morrow.

On arising at early dawn I found the prairie still covered with floating vapour, though the sun through the eastern haze gave promise of a glorious rising.

Wishing to make the most of the cool hours of morning I speedily despatched my break-

fast, and then whistled for my mare, that I might examine her condition for travelling. She came up (for I had brought the creature to a wonderful pitch of docility) limping on three legs, and apparently little the better for her night's rest. This was a grievous disappointment; however, I again bathed the swollen limb, gave her a mouthful of flour and water, and prepared to proceed upon my journey.

After a glance through the spy-glass at the distant "butte" that was to serve me as a landmark, I saddled my unfortunate nag, and led it by its "lariat" on to the grassy plain I was to traverse. Its coarse brown herbage reached above my shoulders, and encumbered as I was with my heavy rifle, knapsack, and the animal, which, even in the path I beat for it, had much ado to get along, my progress was necessarily both slow and toilsome, scarcely indeed averaging more than a mile an hour—a rate at which the short "trajet" threatened to consume the better part of the

day. . Intent, however, on effecting it, I trudged resolutely along, forcing my way through the matted grass, and giving many a wistful look at my chief landmark, which from the prevailing thickness of the air seemed ever at a tantalising distance. Every mile or so I found it needful to halt and give my poor beast a short rest, yet even with the most careful management I found its power of progression was gradually abating, whilst many a deep-drawn moan betrayed the painful nature of its exertions.

Persevering still, in spite of all, I succeeded in reaching, about mid-day, a shallow gulley, which, as far as I could judge by the eye, marked somewhat more than half-distance between my starting-point and goal, and here, under a clump of tuft grass that crested the side of the ravine and yielded a scanty shade, I determined to lie by over the sultriest hour of noon.

The saddle was accordingly once more removed from Yolande's back, her leg bathed,

and a sip of water given her from a brackish pool that had survived from the last rains, which done, I was about to throw myself down in utter weariness under my sorry shelter, when the glimpse of a tawny body gliding away over the opposite bank diverted me for the moment from my purpose. I imagined it to be a panther, an animal I had not yet happened to meet with. Quickly snatching up my piece I started off eagerly after it, and had reached the top of the swell, a somewhat higher one than the rest, behind which the creature had disappeared, when a spectacle met my view that brought me to a startled stand, and riveted every sense in the freezing fascination of horror.

The haze that had hitherto filled the air to the southward had deepened into a black portentous loom which stretched East and West beyond the bounds of vision, and had, as I now perceived, already mounted far into the Heavens.

At its base an endless line of fire—brighter

than the noonday splendour, was seen in active play, feeding the fuliginous cloud with fresh vapour, and accounting but too readily for the unnatural thickness of the atmosphere.

Here was expressed in its own appalling characters the warning, so full of dread significance to the Western voyager of "the Prairie on fire!"

It appeared to be yet some miles off—farther so from me on one side than the hill I had been making for (on gaining which I saw at a glance depended my sole chance of preservation) was, on the other.

Yet on foot—through yon dense and pathless grass—under a noontide sun—with a full-blown fire at my heels—my heart for a moment sank at the fearful ordeal I had in prospect. My poor horse too—was I to abandon it? its good and faithful service forbade the thought.

Darting to the spot where it was lying, I raised it with a smart stroke of the whip and

led it to the top of the bank. Just at that moment a herd of antelopes came by, whose panting sides and faltering pace shewed how severely they had been tasked in sustaining their flight for life. Away they sped in front, and profiting by the path they made I pushed on swiftly after them, leading my horse as before by the trail-rope.

The appearance of the fugitives seemed to inspire it with a sympathetic sense of danger, and instead of dragging at its tether as before, it limped along zealously behind me, keeping fairly up with my pace.

The little mount was now, as far as I could judge, about a league distant, and the fire when I discovered it, might have been a little more in the opposite quarter. Fortunately there was yet no wind stirring, and though the grass I passed through resembled so much tinder, I did not despair, with the start I had if my strength should only hold out, of outstripping my nimble foe. Could I but have

snatched one short hour's rest on halting, it would have aided my chance immensely, for the continued march and drag of the morning in an atmosphere like that of an oven, had told severely on my energies, and I was fearful of their failing in the renewed struggle they were to be taxed by. Should they do so, in that rising roar I knew at once my doom, and in that sailing smoke-cloud beheld already stretched—my funeral pall.

Stimulated by the sense of extremity I pushed precipitately onwards, and had now diminished the distance by about two-thirds, when a strange and sudden faintness overcame me. Like the tired swimmer who sinks when almost reaching at the life-buoy, I found myself utterly disabled from making a further effort. A rush of blood as from a sun-stroke, smote my brain; their muscular energies that had hitherto never failed, forsook my limbs; a host of dancing images mocked my vision, and with the sensation of

one ready to yield his last breath I leaned against my gasping beast, and took my silent farewell of nature.

Yet though volition and movement were thus paralysed, there still remained a sort of half-perceptive consciousness. I felt the ground trembling behind me as a herd of buffaloes, frenzied with fear and wrung by prolonged racing overtook and well nigh trampled me under foot; there came under my view the figure of a young calf distanced and deserted by the rest of the herd, drawing up at poor Yolande's side, and with eyes starting from its head, and tongue lolling out, seeking to lull its terror in the strange companionship. Though in such dire extremity myself, I could not help noting and pitying the animal; I felt the force of its dumb appeals, vain as they were, vain even as my own against the unchained fury of the elements.

Now the horrid crackling of the flames broke upon my ears, ever keener and louder, whilst their myriad forks flickered with blast-

ing brilliance against the sooty background; volumes of pungent vapour were propelled into my face, and the air became every moment less respirable.

With the full consciousness of life, but none of its available powers, I surrendered myself to a fate that seemed inevitable, and was inwardly praying that suffocation might forestall the fiercer agonies of a fiery death, when a band of horsemen—giants and centaurs they then seemed to me in their might—burst through the rolling smoke, and hurried by with the headlong speed of desperation.

I had sunk upon the ground as they sped past, their red forms gleaming like burnished copper in the firelight. And were they then all gone? Had my last chance past away? Was there no hand even in that savage throng stretched out to succour and save? Again the roaring of the flames enthralled my senses, already the nearer forks began to scorch, when I felt myself suddenly raised from the earth by a mighty grasp, and the next moment

whirling furiously along in the flight of the fugitive riders.

By this I had partly begun to rally, and now found my arm dragged back by the "lariat" of my limping steed, of which I had still mechanically retained hold. Finding himself distanced by his fellows my deliverer cast a glance behind, and seeing the nature of the impediment at once severed the thong with a swift stroke of his knife, giving me a look as he did so that said as plainly as words, "Do you value your brute above your life?"

I knew it was in vain to plead for the poor beast; crippled as it was, and with two human lives at stake, the sacrifice, however much it grieved me, I felt was unavoidable.

Recovering our place in the train of the flying horsemen, and pursued by the agonized cries of the abandoned animal, we again made good our ground against the fire, though still half stifled by the thick smoke that went before it, till at length a loud exulting yell from the foremost files, followed by a short

rush up a steep ascent, told us we had reached the wished for place of refuge. Scrambling up the acclivity with last and desperate efforts, the hardy beast that bore us soon gained a bare and grassless elevation, that put us out of reach of further danger. The rest of the band were already found drawn up there spent and panting, and gazing as none but those so situated can gaze at the demon they had so narrowly escaped from.

Impelled by a wind that had at last sprung up, and was fast increasing in violence, it had shewn itself no laggard in the chase. On the first glance we gave from our safe-reached citadel we found it had already passed its base, and was rushing with augmented speed on its march of destruction over the prairie.

The savage who had rescued me from the horrid fate I had been threatened with, straightway dismounted from his brave "mustang," and as I did so in my turn, announced himself in the guttural accent of his race as "Wahtogachto—friend of the white man."

CHAPTER XI.

SUCH is the constitution of our nature, that when newly and narrowly escaped from imminent peril, we are apt to overlook or make light of any that may yet remain to be encountered.

Filled with the pleasurable sense of my late deliverance, it did not at first occur to me (what at length forced itself on my mind), that I might have exchanged elemental dangers for others scarce less formidable from the hostile horde (they were evidently Sioux), into whose hands I had fallen.

Such considerations indeed I was yet scarce in frame for entering into.

Stretched on the ground in a sort of lethargic lull, the effect in great part, of my late sunstroke, I could at first do little else than silently watch the progress of the fire, which as the night closed in, laden with louring vapour, presented on the plain below a spectacle of rare sublimity.

Advancing with a speed that rivalled the rush of cavalry the flaming flood rolled onward, till the herbage in its rear being consumed, and the play of the forks more indistinguishable, a mere distant line of light with its lurid reflection on the heavens, and here and there some smouldering glow in hollows where the vegetation had been ranker, were at length all the traces that remained of it.

By that time it had worn far on into the night, and yielding to the drowsiness upon me, I at last closed my eyes, as many a hardier wight had done before, on this last scene of

the wild and exciting drama in which I had been an actor.

On being aroused next morning by the dazzling sun, I found the Sioux band already risen, and gathered in a sort of council round their chief, which I felt an instinctive conviction had some relation to myself.

They had forborne from disturbing me so long as my slumbers lasted, but as soon as he saw I was in motion, Wahtogachto came up to me with a grave salute, and addressed me thus:—"My brother has slept heavily. He has had a hard race with the prairie fire; but he is now safe and rested, and Wahtogachto is well pleased. Let him look at my Dahcota braves; they too have had to fly and beat the flames. Can he tell why their brows look dark? why they rejoice not either in rest or safety? let him try."

The Sioux paused—crossed his arms upon his breast, and looked at me with an eye full of meaning.

Receiving no answer to his appeal, he pro-

ceeded in an altered tone:—"My white brother has found my people too many on his path,—he has taken them for deer and buffaloes, and shot them to air his shooting iron. Were the Dahcotahs foes, that he should have done this? Has Wahtogachto shewn himself an enemy, that he has shot down his braves like wild beasts? My young men have found blood—the blood of their kindred upon the grass, and their hearts have got hot with looking at it. They call out for pale-face blood to wash it out, and Wahtogachto knows not what to answer them."

It was easy to gather from this address and the peculiar air with which it was delivered, that mischief had been brewed in some way between our respective parties; that blood had been shed on one side, and revenge was being meditated on the other—a circumstance every way unfortunate, and one which it was easy to see portended serious trouble to myself. Urged therefore alike by truth and policy, I

gave a strenuous denial to his charges, so far as they concerned myself, and apparently with some effect, but when I proceeded to defend my comrades, he at once cut short my pleading, by calling up an aged warrior, who had been gloomily watching our conference, to give his testimony on the matter.

Though the guttural jargon in which he did so was necessarily quite unintelligible to me, the looks and gestures that accompanied it sufficiently explained his meaning, and the expressive clutch of his tomahawk with which he wound up his speech, plainly conveyed what, in his mind, was its natural and needful sequel.

Turning to me with the same impassive gravity as before, though shewing in his dark eye something of the angry glitter that lighted that of his witness, the Sioux chief continued:—"My white brother has heard the words of the 'Aged Cottonwood'—he has heard how his son has fallen by the bullets of the short hunter; he was his only child—the

prop of his old age, but he is gone, and his spirit calls for a pale-face ghost to clear its path to the land of spirits. My brother, too, has heard how the Delaware dogs have been let loose, and found shelter under the rifles of the white men ; their rifles can carry far, Wahtogachto knows it well, but (and here his Indian vindictiveness broke out), the arms of the Dahcotah can reach further ; they will catch these Delawares yet, and take vengeance on the strangers who have stolen them."

Pausing awhile to repress his rising ire, he concluded.

" Enough ! my brother has not raised his hand against my braves, or helped our prisoners to run away ; the Dahcotah will still look upon him as their friend, and rely on his aid in getting revenge. I have spoken."

The Teton chief had spoken, and on his will and word my fate depended, but I did not feel my hopes much raised, or my position rendered clearer by his oration. On the

contrary, there was a peculiar expression in his eye as he uttered his last words, which seemed to belie their apparent friendliness, and intimate that if I did not join in his people's plans, of retaliation against my friends, I should supply them with the needed victim in myself.

This I became the more assured of as I watched the bearing of the other Indians, who were gathered under the lee of the 'butte,' in stern debate, and whose faces beneath the brightening day yet wore the moody looks which told how the disasters referred to by their leader, had affected them.

After finishing their consultation, and snatching a hurried meal of raw meat, supplied by some of the more provident of the party, preparations were made for departure with an earnestness and haste seldom exhibited by these stoics of the desert.

There was indeed high need that we should move, for around the saving height from which we viewed it, spread the black and

blasted plain, devoid of a particle of sustenance for man or beast, and threatening assured destruction, by thirst or famine, unless we should speedily succeed in crossing it.

The half-wild horses, which had already saved us from the fire, were still our sole reliance for the purpose, yet it was too much to be feared their condition would not be equal to the additional toil required of them.

After the incredible exertions of the day before not a drop of water had been found for their refreshment, which, like our own, was necessarily limited to a simple rest during the night on the hill-top, when the fervid air enveloping us was found least oppressive.

Whilst sitting apart after my conference with Wahtogachto, meditating on these and kindred matters, two of his warriors came up to me, and, uttering some unintelligible words, proceeded, though in civil fashion, to relieve me of my rifle, knife, and pistol; they then invited me to share their uncooked meal,

which, out of courtesy to them, as well as justice to myself, I deemed it advisable to do. A horse, the sorriest, as it seemed, of the lot, was then assigned me, and the entire band, swart, sullen, and desperate, descended, something like the infernal spirits who had "sat on a hill apart," described by Milton, on to the "burning marl" we had to traverse.

It was not exactly burning, either, for the fire, save in the more thickly herbage bottoms, had had its hour, and was passed away; but a tract of depressive blackness, where "life seemed to have died and death to live," and where for an unknown length of time we should be doomed to travel, destitute of food and water, and supported only by our own individual instincts and endurance.

Though virtually a prisoner, or at the least hostage, among this band of thirty savages, I could not but admire the undaunted spirit which, hour after hour, sustained them in their weary march, and the astonishing sagacity which, unhelped by compass or calcula-

tion, led them towards the point where alone relief seemed to be hoped for.

Scaling one scorched swell after another, and threading many a darksome swale, we journeyed on till noon, oppressed by the wide-spread desolation.

Water was what we were making for—this my own feelings told me—water somewhere, water alone. Celestial Hope itself took the form and attributes of a water-nymph. Yet noon arrived, and when sore fatigue of man and beast enforced a temporary rest under the partial shadow of the bank of an old water-course, its fire-scorched stones alone, too hot even for our horses to stand upon, were all it offered us, paraded by the blazing sun in apparent mockery of our cravings.

Getting again, therefore, into the saddle, we proceeded, silent and suffering, on our way, till our shadows began to lengthen on the ground, and the stumbling of our wither-wrung steeds showed the necessity of again granting them rest.

Once more then we drew rein on a rugged brake—the channel of some former prairie flood—destitute, like the last, of the precious fluid we were wanting, and bearing on its grisly sides the yet glowing ashes of its late verdure.

Releasing the gasping animals from their trappings the Indians quickly spread themselves along its bed, in the vain hope of finding some secret pool, which however, foul and brackish might slake the intensity of their thirst.

This, fire and drought forbade—their quest being in every case quite fruitless.

Suffering, myself as much as the rest, but deterred by sundry hints from Wahtogachto from taking part in their explorations, I beheld them return sullen and disappointed, and as they bestowed themselves on the ground for their night's rest, I could gather but small encouragement in the dark discontented looks that everywhere met my own.

Night at length fell—veiling for awhile

the deformities of the blackened earth, and yielding relief at least from two main sources of our day's suffering, the oppressive glare of the sun and excessive weariness.

Cheering my mind as well as might be, by the contemplation of the fresh and lovely vault above, where Hope in its myriad spheres seemed still to dispense its solacements, I sank at last to sleep with a trust still firm in Providence.

Next morning, long ere sunrise the party were again in motion, gathering in their spiritless horses, and anxious, as it seemed by their movements, to make the most of the cool hours of early dawn in accomplishing what remained of our tristful and trying pilgrimage.

The bits of hide that served for saddles were quickly placed on the poor creatures' backs, and chewing the while morsels of dried buffalo meat, the hardy savages mounted for what was hoped would be the last stage we had to make.

The march began with an evil omen. The horse of the leading Sioux had not taken more than a dozen steps, when, either spent in sheer exhaustion, or stung by some smouldering ember, it fell with its rider to the ground, rolling heavily upon him.

Wahtogachto was taken up insensible, and it was found necessary, when we proceeded, to support him on horseback by a stout Indian on either side.

To me indeed the accident was something more than an evil omen, for in the Sioux chief I had possessed, and now lost, my only safeguard against the openly uttered menaces of the truculent horde he had headed rather than commanded. Hiding these thoughts within my breast, and preserving a cheerful look, I rode my sorry jade among the rest, keeping as near as possible to the scarce conscious chief, till from certain exclamations among the leading horsemen, and more sprightly air of our animals, I inferred we were approaching a spot where we should

find the blessed element we were in search of, and terminate our trials for the time.

Though these anticipations proved correct, it took us nearly an hour longer (more, almost, than our tired out cattle could well wear through) ere they were realized by our reaching a noble stream whose breadth had availed to check the conflagration, and secure its native verdure (how eagerly our eyes gloated on it) to the further bank.

No sooner did our faltering beasts sight it, than defying all attempts to restrain them, they rushed tumultuously into the water, where seeking out the deepest parts, they wallowed and drank, and drank and wallowed till indulgence even threatened as fatal consequences as the pressing want it satisfied.

Nor was it indeed much otherwise with their masters, though at length, like their dumb associates, after allaying their raging fever and burning thirst, they drew slowly by twos and threes to the opposite side, myself among the rest; when, throwing me down upon the

grass, I poured out my secret gratitude to Heaven for this last and timely preservation.

After indulging themselves for some hours in the rest they had so dearly earned, the Sioux held a consultation to determine on the course to be taken with reference to their disabled chief.

Shortly after it had ended, the greater part of the band gathered in their horses, and placing Wahtogachto on the quietest, supported as before by two able sidesmen, took their way across the prairie, leaving but seven of their comrades, together with myself, under the inauspicious command of the "Old Cottonwood."

I watched them depart with a misgiving spirit, for with them went "the friend of the white man," and turning to the others who remained, I read everything in their lowering brows and malign glances to confirm the suspicions I had formed of their foul and sinister purposes. Something of that mysterious instinct that warns the victim steer of the neigh-



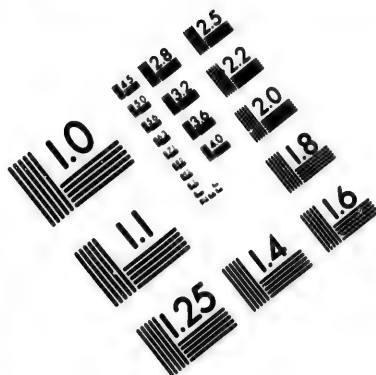
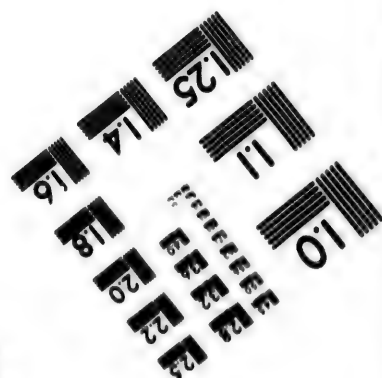
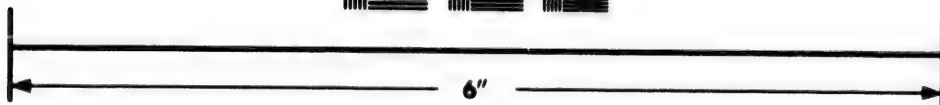
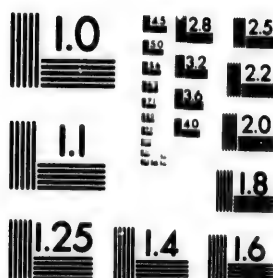


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bouring slaughter-house, gave me its secret surety that the crisis of my fate was approaching; that from the hands of these eight Dahcotahs (the worst favored by far of the band), I was about to meet my death, perhaps suddenly and treacherously dealt, perhaps prolonged in torments, and I internally formed the resolution of attempting at all hazards to escape.

A little below that part of the bank where we were stationed, stretched a long low island, clothed with a fair green herbage, the product of constant irrigation; and here the horses of the band had been driven, partly to afford them better pasturage and partly also as an additional security against their straying; if I could only reach these animals undiscovered, and succeed in mounting that I had marked out as fleetest, the chances would be somewhat in my favor of giving my dangerous mates a final slip. It was the only means of doing so that presented itself, and not knowing what the next minute might bring forth, it was with no

little anxiety I awaited a favorable opportunity for my purpose.

Late in the afternoon, when the shadow of the low prairie bank lay broad upon the stream, several of the Dahcotahs being absent hunting, and the three remaining engaged in kindling a fire for their night's camp, I deemed the wished for moment had arrived, so leaving the best part of my clothes within their view to allay any suspicion of my purpose, stripped in fact to my shirt and hat (the latter rendered necessary by the effects of the "coup de soleil"), under pretence of bathing, I quietly entered the water, swam about for a time within sight of my guards, and then taking heart of grace, struck away stealthily but strongly under the bank towards a sort of cape that would cover my further approach to the cattle. This was speedily reached, and partly hid by its fringe of reeds I ventured to take a last look round ere leaving their shelter to make the final push for the Sioux herd.

My first glance was towards the group I had left at the camp fire; here all remained as I had left it, and nerved by the prospect of escape I was upon the point of dashing across the shallow stream towards the animals on which it depended, when a shadow passed between me and the bright sunshine I was about to turn from, and at but a few paces off, with bow already bent and arrow aimed, rose the hateful figure of the "Old Cottonwood."

Step by step, no doubt, with sleepless eye he had dogged me along the bank as I swam down, gloating on his approaching feast of vengeance; and now, deeming the hour arrived, he remained for a few moments regaling himself characteristically with its foretaste.

Rage was largely mingled with my astonishment at beholding this baleful apparition, and in my broad brimmed hat and dripping shirt I stood gazing at him after a fashion, that had he had any humanity about him would have quenched his atrocious purpose in a hearty fit of laughter. But far was the

mirthful mood from the temper and intents of the old Cottonwood. What he craved for was a victim, and that victim to present a good broad mark for his arrow : here he had both (as it would seem) to his mind.

I have said he paused for a moment to enjoy the anticipation of his revenge ; it was one of those providential pauses that so often relieve us of the cup of evil when almost at our lips, and in the present case it availed to reverse our respective dooms.

Seeing how certain was my fate remaining where I was, I darted towards the bank to engage the fell sagittary at close quarters. It was about a yard in height, and only a few paces from me, but the water—mid thigh deep—greatly impeded my advance, and I was yet but with my knee upon the grass in the act to rise, when the bow, which in the gratification of his torture-loving tastes had been often drawn, and as often unbent, was stretched once more with murderous aim,

the shaft it held being pointed, close almost to touching it, against my breast.

The freezing conviction passed across me that, baffled by time, I should feel it the next instant quivering in my vitals, when the sharp crack of a rifle sounded from the islet shore; the arrow that was to have drawn my life blood sung idly and erring over the water, and the savage who had aimed the vengeful missile—stricken by one more fatal—fell dead, almost into my arms as I arose.

CHAPTER XII.

WHILE yet scarce freed from his unwelcome weight, a voice, proceeding apparently from the herd of horses opposite, saluted me in these words:

"This a-way, Squire, this a-way; over the water, and spry at that, or you'll get skewered yet; the critters are crowdin' down to cut you off."

A thrill of joy passed through me as I recognized the voice of Jannock, and hailed his unerring aim. Snatching the knife of my dead adversary from his belt, I instantly dashed into the stream and made towards the sturdy

figure which at length presented itself at the islet end.

He was quietly re-charging his weapon as I got up, cast a brief, scrutinizing glance at my hat as he gave me a cheerful nod, and remarked, "A close shave, squire, rayther a close shave. Range so'thin' long for an old man's arm; but you'll float yet, I'm thinkin'; no matter for short fixen (smiling at my scanty drapery) when the timbers is sound. Now, as we're so'thing' underhanded for our work, hie ye away and help the Delawares yonder (pointing to two strange Indians who were busily engaged in the midst of the Sioux herd) in getting in the mustangs, while I keep these ragamuffins to their own side o' the creek."

In obedience to his instructions I lost no time in giving what assistance I could to the two friendly natives, who were still struggling with the four prime animals they had seized, and by our united efforts they were ere long eventually secured.

Whilst thus employed we were aroused by another report, and turning round beheld two of the three Dahcotahs I had left by the camp fire, awakened to their danger, running along the opposite bank to attempt the rescue of their cattle, whilst a dark, moving object in the water showed that the remaining one had committed himself to the stream with the same object, and thus exposed himself to Jannock's fire. It seemed, too, to have taken effect upon him, for simultaneously with the discharge the savage, throwing his arms wildly into the air, immediately sank from sight.

"That fellow's rubbed out, at any rate," exclaimed I.

"I suspicion not. He was on his back, and there was too little of him out to touch the life; he's only barked, if that, and will play us some rogue's trick yet afore we've done with him."

Whilst reloading his piece he inquired how many of the Sioux had been left on their separation; I told him the number. "That'll

do then; we've scomfished one at any rate, and the rest are too few to try a rush on us."

Whilst we were thus talking, a loud yell was heard from the other end of the island, and the four horses it had not been thought worth while to secure, were seen dashing across the water towards the hostile bank, stampadoed by the venturous swimmer I had thought killed by Jannock's shot.

"Aye," observed Bryce, "that's just the very thing I was lookin' for; well, we've got the pick o' the lot, and he's welcome to the lumber; now, as there's nothing further to fight about, we'll up and away, while the play's good and the light lasts."

It so happened that at this moment the warrior whose hardihood we were commenting on conceived the unlucky idea of celebrating his achievement by a yell of triumph.

This was too much for Bryce's philosophy, who might besides have been somewhat galled at the failure of his late attempt.

The Indian was seated on one of the animals he had re-captured, and about two hundred yards from us, his body in full view, and evidently from the distance believing himself in perfect safety. Muttering a half-suppressed oath, our hunter levelled his piece with unusual care, and the next instant the presumptuous Sioux paid the forfeit for his uproar by dropping from the animal's back.

"I've only 'creased' the critter arter all," remarked Bryce, with one of his collar laughs, "but it'll stop his screeching any how, and make him less handy at horse thievin'."

Taking warning by their comrades' discomfiture, the Dahcotahs now sought cover, and as every consideration on our own side counselled immediate departure, we mounted (with the two friendly Indians, so mysteriously recruited,) the four fine mustangs we had captured, and crossed the further arm of the stream, on to the burnt plains we had so lately and gladly quitted.

Jannock led, and so great was the necessity

of making rapid progress, that as long as the day light lasted, but little conversation passed between us; even the information so anxiously desired by me about the rest of our party being waived by our leader with silent gestures or monosyllabic replies.

About an hour, however, after night had fallen, a halt was called, and a general council held (in which the Delawares joined), to consider the most effectual course to be taken for eluding the pursuit of our late foes (possibly reinforced from the main body), and regaining our camp.

To retrace the weary traverse we had already made, was mentioned only to be set aside as ensuring the destruction both of horse and man, reduced as they were by their former hardships, and but half recruited by their late rest.

It was decided, therefore, as the only other course left us, to make a forced march in the form of a curve over the devastated tract (in order to mislead our enemies), which would

bring us again to the river a good way farther up, when, crossing to the unburnt bank, we might find both forage for the cattle and food for ourselves, while pushing our way on for the waggon station.

This détour it was needful to perform during the night, in order to prevent the Sioux from taking up our trail too early, and we therefore lost no time in executing it.

The nights had now become sharp, and my equipment being much lighter than was comfortable, I availed myself of an offer kindly made me by Jannock, of his blanket, by way of amending it.

Picking our way over the sable ground as well as the faint light from the stars, and practised optics of our allies enabled us, we diligently journeyed on till a little before dawn, when we again drew rein, and waited till the increasing light should give us better knowledge of our bearings. Remounting at sunrise, it was not long ere our eyes were

gladdened by the sight once more of the water, for which we made direct, that our horses might take the refreshment they were again greatly in need of. The further side as before shewing a fair growth of herbage, we passed at once across to it, and indulged the enduring animals with a feed of several hours.

Though able to quench our thirst from the source at hand, we were all suffering much from hunger, which we had had for days no means of appeasing, save by some odds and ends of dried buffalo meat, and we accordingly sent off our red allies on to the prairie to try if they could pick off one of these animals (of which signs had been seen during the morning), with their arrows. Jannock, for some reason, declined to share their labour, and refused with true backwood jealousy, to let his rifle quit his hands.

The hunt fortunately proved productive, and in little more than a couple of hours they

rejoined us with a welcome load of wild beef, on which we lost no time in doing due execution.

Taking up our march in more cheerful guise along the unscathed bank, we steadfastly continued it till noon, when a tuft of middle-sized cotton-woods presenting itself, we took advantage of its shade to rest once more, and consult as to the further direction to be pursued.

After turning out our animals to feed, taking another hearty tug at the buffalo meat, and posting one of the Indians on a neighbouring rise as sentinel, my trusty comrade and myself stretched ourselves on the sloping bank, and sharing his pipe in turn (my own had been lost during my late mishaps), entered upon the explanations so long deferred, and so anxiously desired by each of us.

"There," said he, tendering me the replenished tube, "that's the sort o' thing when natur' feels like caving in; when I seed you led off from the butte, t'other morning,

by them cut-throat Seehoo, I wouldn't ha' given that pipe o' baccy now for all inside your red flannel shirt."

"Why, you don't mean to say you *did* see me on that occasion?"

"Ask Peg-top there whether we didn't; and knowing what had passed atween them and us, I feared it was the last sight I should ha' gotten o' ye. If it hadn't been for him and his long comrade yonder, I quest'on whether Truegroove could ha' made his v'ice heerd in the matter to any purpose. Even with them and the Seehoo hosses to boot (for it's these, arter all, we're most obligated too), it was a mighty close shave, I tell you; that beaver o' yourn won't turn water again so soon, I'm thinkin'."

Moved by the hunter's speech and peculiar look that accompanied it, I took off the article alluded to, and there, sure enough, right through the upper part was seen the plain perforation of a rifle ball!

The truth of its being a "close shave"

became at once forcibly, and I may add far from pleasantly, impressed upon me. Well (thought I to myself), Bryce, you are a "thorough-going" friend with a vengeance, and your balls, I may say, are no bad type of yourself. Bryce regarded me steadily as I examined the somewhat startling evidence of his shaving powers, and as he divined my thoughts, said, with the slightest possible trace of humour in his eye:

"Rayther too near the hair, you're a thinkin' belike. Well, I had to mind my hind sights, that's a fact, but I was sure o' the old ir'n, ne'ertheless, and can still hit a deer atween the eyes at a hundred yards. Then there warn't no two ways about it, you'll consider; I couldn't ha' dropped the creatur' no way else, you covered him so; and, arter all, squire," wound up the hunter, with an appeal to my candour quite irresistible; "you must acknowledge that a bullet thro' your beaver's better than a yardwand thro' your lights."

Against such close shaving and close rea-

soning combined there was no possibility of replying, and I accordingly thanked my thorough-going friend with a gravity becoming the occasion.

I had now finished my pipe (who can tell the value of this luxury but those who like ourselves have puffed its incense on the desert air?), which Jannock took up and filled in his turn.

After giving a few whiffs he desired me to relate to him what had befallen me since we separated, which I accordingly did with all due particularity, when, after asking a few questions as to dates and places, he proceeded to narrate the adventures that had fallen to his own share.

"Wull, by your tell," he began, "that bufflo o' yourn has led you a pretty dance, but the devil himself and all his angels seemed to ha' got aboard that I follered.

"Arter chasing it for the best part of an hour I got so riled that, I swore I would see it down, or it should see me. Well, I think

it must ha sworn the same, and with better warrant too, for it led me into as nice a mess afore we parted as ever mortal boggled into. Now and then, arter a long stretch, to show it had the heels of me, it would stand stock still as if ready to give out, when I would get off my horse, and steal up for a shot; then as I got within levelling distance away it would streak again through the long grass, like a flash of greased lightnin'; then poor Cocktail would feel it had had enough of the sport, and give me no end o' trouble to catch him again, when we would foller on the heifer's tracks to find it, may be, feeding a mile ahead, ready to play the same shines over again.

"So in this way we carried on till past noon, when I found I had drawn quite nigh our overnight's camp on the gulley, and my poor jade was so blown I was thinkin' o' giving up the hunt arter topping the next swell, when, on getting there, as ill luck would have it, right afore me—nearer than ever, lay the bedlam bufflo—squat on the

ground, as if it had now fairly knocked under.

"Well, thinks I, I've got you down at last, my sweetheart, and spurred my nigh-spent hoss for a last rush at it. I could scarce believe my eyes, when the critter sprung up as spry as ever, and in three minutes dived head-long down into the gulley with myself hard at its heels. The bank being steep and rough, proved too much for poor Cocktail, who, on reaching the bottom, fell like so much pump water, rolling me over with him.

"This happened nigh the Seehoo camp, and I had barely time to pick up myself and Truegroove, when I caught a blink of some redskins down the creek, who had heerd the crash and came running up with a yell.

"As there was no possibility of raising Cocktail in time to save him, I started back up bank, to get clear myself, if I could, in the long grass of the praira swales. It struck me, however, as I climbed it, there would be little chance of this with the inimy so close behind,

and I therefore, detarmined to turn short to the right along the creek edge, where there was a sprinklin' o' bushes, and snake towards the Seehooquarters where there would be least likelihood of their follerin' me. You may think I had little ch'ice, when I did this, but I partly reckoned, as it indeed fell out, the warriors would be mostly away after the bufflo, and by being nearest the fire I should stand least chance of getting smoked, as they say, until at nightfall I might dodge my way back again.

" Well, I had crept along for about a rifle shot, when I found myself right over the camp I had spied into the night afore, and there, the first thing as caught my eye were the two Delawares lying on the ground tethered hand and foot. Eh, Peg! (addressing the native who sat with us, and to whom he had handed his pipe) you didn't think then you would be smoking the calumet so soon with your white friends.

" The camp, as I suspicioned, was nigh de-

sarted, for being a war party there were no women or papooses hangin' about it. A single Dahcotah lay nigh the prisoners, left as guard, but he seemed either half asleep or at any rate not to have heerd his cumrades' outcry.

"Seeing the coast so clear, a sudden thought came across me that if I could only set free these two captyves, besides doing a good turn to old fri'nds (for, as I have said, I partly knowed 'em afore), my chance would be mainly bettered of getting a fair offing myself. So I detarmined, being in a fix every way, to try the thing off hand, and strike a bold stroke for the whull on us. Whetting my knife on my moccasin, I stole down the bank into the gulley and snaked myself thro' the brush to where Peg here was lying, who, the 'cute old coon, kept as still as a log, just watching me thro' the tail of his eye as I came on. The Seehoo was lolling by his fire with his back to us, so I quietly cut Peg's thongs and put my pistol in his hand, signing him to keep his eye on the sluggard; then I crept on to Swift-

foot, cut his lashings and guv' him my knife. V'ices was now heerd nigh at hand, the drowsy guard began to rouse himself and rub his eyes, but afore he could well open them or raise wind for a yell the long Delaware was upon him, and sent him with a single stroke to his everlastin' sleep.

"Well, you may be sure it was all neck or nothing with us now. Picking up the Seehoo's bow and arrows away darted Swiftfoot up the gulley side, then Pegtop, then me, and we had got about a hundred yerds upon the praira when out rung the inimy's yell over the dead body of the sleeper. Now was the pinch, life or death for us in the next few minutes. Stooping low among the grass we pushed smartly along towards a branch creek, where we hoped to find a hidin' place for the night. This by good luck we reached; and were just stowing ourselves in a spot that offered a likely 'cache,' when three of the buffalo hunters came in sight, soon spied us, and dropping the meat from their beasts came galloping

and whooping up. Being only man for man we didn't doubt but we could deal with them, and if there had been ten times as many we had nothing left but to fight it out, as there war'nt no massy to be looked for on our side.

"So, crouching down under the bank which partly sheltered us from arrows, and offered a rest for our shootin' ir'ns, we waited till they came up—quite chipper like—and then let fly about ten paces off.

"Truegroove dropped his game as a matter o' coorse, Peg with his long pistol unsaddled another, tho' he crept away arterwards among grass, and the third seeing how matters went with his mates turned tail, when Swiftfoot running up secured the two hosses in a twinklin'; he and Peg got on to one, I on the other, and we now determined instead of hiding to try if we could save our hair by our horse-flesh.

"Providence stood our fri'nd that night if ever it did, for tho' on topping a swell

now and then we could see the Seehoo in pursuit, our hosses' mettle kept us well ahead of them, and finally carried us out of eyeshot. I reckon their critters had been worn out with hunting, for your redskins ride like devils, and ourn were the fresher or may be had the better bottom of the two.

"But where to go next was still a knotty question, for they would foller on the foot trail to a sartainty, and to make straight to camp would ha' been to bring the whull pack o' ragin' wulves upon you and Robin, which was a thing not to be thought on, so I states my complexity," said Bryce, filling his pipe again and drawing a long breath, "to Swiftfoot, who promised if I would only keep the matter dark to take me to a spot where, with a piece like 'Truegroove' we might keep the whull Seehoo nation at bay, or if we liked it better might 'cache' under their very noses and never be seen. Wull, Squire, where d'ye think now it was? In three hours after we drawed up at the Butte.

"As we was settin on the top about sun-down, with all our eyes about us, I fancied I heerd your horn, and though it was a risky thing to do at the time I thought it would be no more than neighbour like to give you an answerin' blast. So I blowed my best, tho' I'm so'thing in a wonderment too you should have heerd it at the big timber brake. It makes me larf yet when I think o' the wry faces Pegtop pulled as he heerd me buglin'.

"Wull, arter swearin' me again not tell (and you're none the nearer to 'em for anything I've said), Swiftfoot showed me his hiding places, places you would never ha' thought on or found if you had searched till doomsday, and which I reckon none but these wanderin' Delawares who, poor critters, are often hard set for shelter, are at all acquaint wi'; and here we were all snugly 'cached' when Wahto and his vagabonds gallopped up with you among 'em and the fire hard at your heels.

"I seed you more than onst during the

night, and would fain have struck a blow to get you free, but it would ha' been altogether too risky and done more harm than good ; so as soon as you rode off in the morning we quietly follered on your trail (a weary spell we had on't ; well might poor Steve say it was 'downing' work), snaked up under cover of the Seehoo hosses, and got within shot—the Lord be thanked !—just in time to stop that old red atomy from ticketing you off for the next world.

“ Look at that critter, Peg, how grave and unconcerned he sits, as if he'd had neither art nor part in the business, instead of pickin' out the sign for us from first to last. He says he was raised down East on the head waters of the Hudson nigh five and fifty summers agone, when his people might be told by thousands, and syne then he has been druv and baited by the Yankees, him and his'n, step by step here away West among the hoss Injyns, where I suspicion they've but hard times on it, every man's hand being agin them. The whites

guv him the name of Pegtop from some throaty Injyn name they thought it sounded like. Swiftfoot yonder is a younger man, and has a dash of the Mohawk in his blood. The down-easters have been too smart for him too, and arter giving him his name from his speed, have sent him like poor Peg to practyce his paces on the praira. They've been hunting together now for five years past they tell me, and if we can only get 'em to take on with us, as I partly think we may, I don't stick to say they'll be worth half a dozen at least of any of your rowdy v'y'gers."

END OF VOL. I.

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